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Frontispiece. *See page 87.*

TENNIS TOPICS

AND

TACTICS.

By F. W. PAYN, B.A., LL.M.,

Late Whewell Scholar of International Law in the University of Cambridge; Lawn Tennis Singles ex-Champion of Scotland, Frankfort, Russia, Gravesend, Moravia, Pitlochry, Sweden, Blackheath, Vienna, Denmark, Kent County, Lower Austria, etc.; Doubles ex-Champion of Holland, Scotland, Russia, Folkestone, Sweden, Vienna, etc.; Finalist for the Singles Championship of Germany, Austria, Holland, and the North of England, and for the Doubles Championships of Ireland, Germany, Austria, and the North of England.

With fifty-seven full-page Plates of Tennis Positions, prepared from Photographs taken from Life specially for this work.

LONDON:
L. UPCOTT GILL, BAZAAR BUILDINGS, DRURY LANE, W.C.
NEW YORK:
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS, 153-157, FIFTH AVENUE.
1907.

PREFACE.

THIS book represents the gleanings of twelve seasons and of a hundred and twenty tournaments concerning the science of lawn tennis. That it *is* a physical science capable of exact demonstration in many essential respects will, the writer hopes, become clear to the discerning reader of this book. Anyone casually dipping into it might hastily conclude that it consists chiefly of negative criticism. But the reader who goes through the present work on a game which steadily attracts more attention every year throughout Europe and elsewhere will find that in the end enough points have been raised, illustrated, and discussed to convey to him the greater part of the technique of the present writer (for what it is worth) concerning the strokes and tactics of a game which he, in common with many others, found sufficiently fascinating, exciting, and healthful to follow to the excess mentioned above.

To "hunt the dollar" is a great and indispensable pursuit for the majority; but it is the writer's belief that tournament tennis affords no mean education in the art of making one's leisure wholesome, lively, and enjoyable, which is so little understood by many of those who have not merely hunted but have caught the dollar. If anyone thinks that the writer is here merely ranging himself on the side of frivolity and luxury he is mistaken, for good

tournament play is real and vigorous, and the writer knows that it is not luxurious, although these things are often concomitants of lawn tennis, just as they are of many other things which are in themselves the reverse of luxurious.

In judging of the quality of a sport we are all naturally inclined to base our opinion largely on the personality of those who follow it. This is a great mistake. We should rather consider the essential qualities of the sport itself—which remain the same—than the failings and peculiarities of those who happen to be playing it during the short time which a tournament player "lasts" in efficiency. If one man plays on thirteen whiskies and another follows the game for six months in the year, it does not therefore follow that the game itself is a bibulous or idle pursuit and not a healthy, exhilarating, and scientific sport.

As I am well aware that many people will consider that the science discussed in this book is essentially a useless one (which I entirely deny, unless one employs that word in the very narrowest sense), I take the opportunity to make one or two remarks about utility. Much of the education of the moneyed classes in England at the present day tends to develop the art of living elegantly and agreeably on invested funds rather than the art of getting the funds to invest, although the latter ought certainly to be developed concurrently at least as much as the former.

The writer lately read an oration by a Cambridge Regius Professor in which he expressed his horror of any course of study at college which should have an immediate cash value afterwards, as if there were necessarily something illiberal and ignoble about any pursuit if it happened to be of direct use in supplying

the primary needs of existence afterwards.* "All that the University should be responsible for," the Professor observed, "is that its graduates should have *a certain development of mind and imagination.*" His remarks would have possessed an added weight if all his hearers (chiefly medical students) had possessed an endowment of £1,500 a year. Undoubtedly many other educational authorities share the views of the Regius Professor that *the first essential of any liberal study is that it must be useless*, which appears to me rather a dangerous theory in the world as we know it. A sound and brilliant American authority (General F. A. Walker) has said that usually one of the great essentials for success in after-life is *not* to be successful at the ordinary school book-work of the day. This is certainly true as regards lawn tennis, inasmuch as at present the school work (and college work also) is mostly all "head" and no "hand," as if the world were carried on in that way, so that successes in grammar and philology mostly mean that the possessor of them will be somewhere near the "30" mark in second-class handicaps. As a matter of fact, much of the good-class English education of the day, apart from athletics, simply tends to send out its successful students as specialists in grammar and philology into an unphilological world, which is a proceeding with considerable possibilities for tragedy in it. An average University education appears to be based on the assumption that every undergraduate has about £50,000 in the hands of trustees. Those of us whose education,

* "Disinterestedness in its true meaning depends not upon the studies pursued, not upon their immediate usefulness or uselessness, but upon the spirit in which the student enters upon and pursues his work. If there be intellectual honesty, if there be zeal in investigation, if there be delight in discovery, if there be fidelity to the truth as it is discerned, nothing more can be asked by the educator of highest aims."—Walker.

although nominally successful, has in reality been visionary and unpractical, and who have suffered proportionally, usually consider that, under Providence, we are chiefly indebted to the school, and especially to the University, for fostering during many formative years that cardinal and pernicious delusion which consists in believing that the chief and sufficient end of man is to think about things, write about them, and talk about them, and not to do them or to make them. Hence arises the tragic contrast between a great part of modern education at school and college, and life in the outside world. "I refuse," said a well-known American in as many words, "to be any longer a party to a system of education which chiefly makes people skilful in teaching things they do not understand, and in describing that which they have never seen."* This remark is especially applicable to some recent books on lawn tennis.

No doubt this digression is out of place here, but perhaps some people may find it justifiable.

As there is a certain sameness about the illustrations in this book, the writer desires to say, by way of explanation, firstly that as he has only a left-handed and not a right-handed knowledge of the strokes shown in the photographs he could not guarantee their accuracy if the positions had been "built up" on a right-handed player, and, secondly, that the book was started and finished in just thirty-seven days in the Sahara of the outer suburbs, where there was neither the time nor the opportunity to take snapshots (except mental ones) of the players of the day. One thing, however, is guaranteed about the photographs, viz., that every one

* "Possibly some ultimate form for institutions of the higher learning may yet be developed which shall embody much of both the modern school of technology and of the old-fashioned college."—Walker.

of them, except two or three "skits," conveys some definite fact about the way to play lawn tennis which has been of practical value at least to the present writer in playing the game, and no useless photographs have been inserted merely for the sake of so much pictorial padding. This is worth noting in view of recent publications.

The use of the word "tennis" to mean "lawn tennis" in the title of this book is justified in the writer's opinion by the facts, firstly, that everyone on the Continent and almost everyone in England understands "tennis" to mean lawn tennis; and, secondly, that almost everywhere abroad and during the winter in England it is played on courts which are not lawns at all. The existence of half a dozen courts in the whole of England for the playing of a rare and obsolete game is not sufficient to monopolise the use of the well-known word "tennis." Nearly all the chapters in the book, with the exception of those on "The Backhand Strokes" (No. VI.) and on "Tactics in Doubles" (No. XII.), are either very short or fairly short, and can be consumed separately as literary hors d'œuvres, while the two chapters named may be regarded as the more solid but, it is hoped, not unappetising portions of the meal. No part of the book has been published previously.

In conclusion, the author can only say that if anyone gets half the pleasure and interest from reading the book which the writing of it produced, he will have reason to be satisfied with his bargain.

BICKLEY, KENT.
November, 1906.

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Tennis Topics and Tactics.

ERRATA.

Plate 21 (facing page 60).—*For* "the swiftest backhand strokes" *read* "the swiftest of backhand strokes."

Page 129.—*For* "Lohmann" *read* "Lahmann."

Page 151.—*For* "every good backhand driver in England *uses it when driving*" *read* "drives with the bat in line with the forearm."

the defence of these islands must depend wholly upon the Navy. As long as our Navy is supreme, *invasion of our shores is impossible;* if our Navy were defeated, invasion would become superfluous. The only home risk against which the Navy cannot guarantee us is the risk of a raid by a determined body of men willing to sell their lives for the sake of striking a blow at a point where great damage could be done in brief time —for example, by destroying one of our naval arsenals. Even against this risk the best preparation is probably to be found on the water by the maintenance of a sufficient number of torpedo-boats to prevent the possibility of a hostile landing. *At any rate, the idea of main-*

taining a huge force of Volunteers and Militia to preserve our homes from invasion is a mischievous and dangerous delusion (!) If any raid or invasion were to be attempted, its execution would be entrusted to the picked men from our opponents' army, and *it would be sheer murder to send half-trained citizen soldiers to meet such a force* (!) *The real function of the Volunteers and Militia,* as they themselves demonstrated in the South African War, is to reinforce the Regulars in defence of our possessions beyond the sea. *When once this principle is grasped by the whole nation* we can set to work seriously to build up a really valuable reserve force."

So says the *Daily Graphic.* Before I go any further I would ask the reader to consider the following facts. Here is an island from one part of which one can plainly distinguish the cornfields on the Continent on a clear day, and which is reached, by the aid of modern machinery, from France in about fifty-five minutes. I do not think I can better illustrate the actual tendency of the article which I have just quoted than by referring to that part of it in which, in spite of our proximity to the Continent, the writer says "The idea of maintaining a huge force of Volunteers and Militia to preserve our homes from invasion is *a mischievous and dangerous delusion.*" How mischievous? and how *dangerous?* The Volunteers, as their name implies, are not paid by the State. The writer of the article also admits that in case of need they would be invaluable (after the example of the C.I.V.) to reinforce our Regular troops. How, then, can there on any conceivable hypothesis be anything *mischievous and dangerous* in raising as large a force of these voluntary and unpaid troops as the barest prudence should cause

us to raise in view of the great fact that we dwell actually within long-distance cannon range of the Continent?

The writer of the article admits what everybody knows, viz., that in time of need frontiers so vast as those of our Empire would need great numbers of defenders. How, then, can there be anything *mischievous and dangerous* in fostering the knowledge of military science in as many of the youth of the nation as will voluntarily learn it? Let us suppose for a moment that the opinions set out below concerning the risk and even the probability of an attempt at invasion are those of a large majority of citizens of ordinary common sense and patriotism, and that by reason of those or similar opinions a huge increase in the Volunteer Forces takes place. Why should there be anything *mischievous or dangerous* in the existence of these masses of trained troops, inasmuch as they would be far more likely to volunteer for service abroad when the need should arise, where the *Daily Graphic* admits they are necessary, than they would be if they had abstained from joining the Volunteers? They may or may not have to repel an invasion, but under no possible hypothesis could their existence as a trained force be regarded as anything but most valuable.

The *Daily Graphic* bases its assumptions that Volunteers to repel invasion ought in fact to be abolished on the argument that "as long as our Navy is supreme, invasion of our shores is impossible; if our Navy were defeated, invasion would become superfluous." Neither of these statements should be taken to be proved for an instant by people of common sense. In the first place, *any Continental enemy of ours in his senses would much rather attempt to conquer us by*

landing 200,000 men (if he could), in a country which had obligingly half-committed suicide already by denuding itself of its Volunteer Forces for the sake of a mad theory, than by attempting to scuttle all the ships containing the very flower of the nation as regards courage and especially *executive ability and practical sense.* He could leave them to wander about the world as they pleased (as long as their supplies lasted) if only he could snatch the few hours necessary to transport the men to some unguarded spot in our island, and thus *aim a blow direct at the heart of our body-politic, which, if not parried, would cause the collapse of the whole huge trunk, Navy and all.*

The *Daily Graphic* says that the only invasion we have to fear is "a *raid* by a determined body of men willing to sell their lives for the sake of striking a blow at a point where great damage could be done in brief time—for example, by destroying one of our naval arsenals." On the contrary, I say that they would get as far away from the arsenals as possible, and attempt to land on some unfrequented beach such as can be found in great abundance on our coast. It is also incredible that the terrible risks of running the gauntlet of our ships in going and returning would be taken by men merely with the intention of making a raid.

I have not spent many months in wandering about the unfrequented parts of these islands in search of sport without realising that the *Daily Graphic* idea of a sort of naval "chevaux de frise" around the island is only true to a very limited extent. *All that would be needed to effect the landing of a large force would be, not the destruction of our Navy, but merely the diversion of its strength from a given point* (by engage-

ment or otherwise) *for a few hours*. I hope my readers will see the enormous difference between the two things. *In many cases the naval "strength" at a given point would be practically nil if the secret were well kept and the diverting naval engagement well carried out.*

If the *Daily Graphic* views became generally held, and if the landing were once effected, it would not matter how many ships were lost in the process of creating a diversion, for with the heart of the Empire in his possession the invader could snap his fingers at the British fleet, and ultimately make his own terms. Moreover, it is all very well to talk about the national pluck, but *there is no fact better proved in this world than that pluck in itself will only avail up to a certain point against superiority in artillery and tactics.* No one can win a battle, any more than he can win a tennis match, on pluck alone.

I do not know how many ships of the *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse* pattern would be required to carry 200,000 troops for a very few hours, but I have an idea that very few would suffice. Anyhow, I believe many people will agree with me that there is no wild improbability about the above conjectures, and that it is quite possible that in a war with a Naval Power sufficiently strong to keep the hands of our Navy full in one place while it "ran the blockade" in another with its troopships, a large army might be landed in the space of a very few hours in the lonely district of Ross-shire or Sutherlandshire, for example. The *speed* of steamships has revolutionised everything in naval warfare.

Now let the reader mark what the *Daily Graphic* says concerning such an event. There is not much of

the "Let 'em all come" spirit about its remarks. It says that the invaders would be composed of picked men, and that "*it would be sheer murder to send half-trained citizen soldiers to meet such a force.*" That is all the more reason for sending *fully-trained* citizen soldiers to meet them. We have seen what the Boers, who were a body of undrilled but practical outdoor irregulars (mostly sporting farmers), could do against professional soldiers, and I do not think the Volunteers need be discouraged at the example they afforded of the value of non-professional troops. An English Volunteer is at least as good a man as a Boer. I mentioned the nearness of the French coast earlier in this chapter. With regard to the possibility of an invading expedition from that coast, it is noteworthy that many people are convinced that without foreign assistance France would soon be once more prostrate at the feet of its late invaders if they were to fight again. I will not attempt to fathom the motives which inspired the *Daily Graphic* once more to repeat the doctrine concerning *the uselessness of a Volunteer Force*, which originated from a sophistical Scotch dialectician, but I do say that the "Chancellerie" of a hostile Power could hardly have propounded for us anything more deleterious. My own opinion after reading the article is that someone wants to sack London and to have as little to do with the Navy as possible in the process. The weakness of human nature accounts for the rest.

Moreover, if our Navy sustained a partial defeat near home, it is quite possible that it might be refitted in some Colonial port, during which time we should or should not be invaded according to the strength of the Volunteer Force. Enough food for a year at least could easily be stored in the country, in the form

of "erbswurst," &c., and beans, which latter, by the way, supported Aristotle during one of the sieges of Athens.

I do not suppose that the nation will either swallow or act on the *Daily Graphic* doctrines, or will denude itself of its Volunteer Force, or suffer the Empire to be argued away by journalists; but if the *Daily Graphic* really represented the national opinion about the value of the Volunteers, I should say it was a case of "Quem deus vult perdere prius dementat."

I can imagine the stentorian guffaws of laughter with which the military officers of great Continental Military Powers would read the suggestion that we should strip ourselves of our Volunteer Army of defence on the assumption that our Navy formed an invulnerable cordon round the island, and how they would say, "The English have one city alone with the wealth of several whole nations in it, and they propose to strengthen its defences by disbanding their land forces which work for nothing." Yet that is what the "dinghey doctrine" means in practice.

The contention that the proper use for the Volunteers is foreign service is especially inopportune and ridiculous. If they were questioned on this subject a minority of them would probably say, "We are unattached units and we are willing to serve anywhere provided we are given a free choice in the matter first," but the majority would almost certainly reply in the main to this effect, "We joined the Volunteers and gave up a great deal of the small stock of leisure in our busy lives in order to help to fight the foreigner if he should manage to land on our shores, or to terrify him from attempting to land. We have our businesses and people dependent on us here, so that *it is not our*

duty to go abroad to foreign wars unless the collapse of the Empire is likely to follow defeat. We leave that service to those who are differently situated, and we consider that we perform our full share of public work in helping to guard the heart of the Empire, at great personal sacrifice in many cases. We believe that an invasion would be the first thing a powerful military foe would attempt to execute."

I leave the reader to judge for himself whether it be a mischievous and dangerous delusion to prepare for the emergency of an invasion.

There is one other point about the *Daily Graphic's* advice on national defence which is noteworthy. I refer to the suggestion strongly put forward in its columns so to educate the naval officer that he becomes, in fact, a mere *fighting passenger* on his own ship, and largely ignorant of the machinery and engineering by means of which the ship is worked. If duties on a warship were always so nicely divided that one class of men always fought and navigated the ship and another engineered her, there might be some excuse for this lop-sided education; but it is well known that, especially in the navigation of the smaller naval craft, a thousand things may happen in storm or war which may make a knowledge of engineering more important at the time than a knowledge of gunnery or navigation. Moreover, for the last century our naval officers have fortunately been rarely at war, and in view of the amount of time on their hands, which must be used up largely in duties of some sort, it is certainly unwise to prevent them from becoming properly acquainted with that most complicated, interesting, and (to them) invaluable subject —viz., marine engineering in all its branches. To

shut off the officer on deck from a thorough acquaintance with the motive power below by which the ship is moved is to turn him partly into a fighting passenger and to induce him to spend even more time than he sometimes does at present over his luncheon port or his evening "cocktails," with no great benefit to his mental lucidity. Mistakes by naval officers are apt to be expensive.

There is one thing which continually surprises me about the British journalists of the day in their treatment of the important military questions about which they have lately, with good reason, written so much. I refer to their almost absolute lack of comprehension of the great fact that *it is competitive athletic games of all kinds which have largely made the British officer and the British soldier often what they are, viz., brave and persistent. All the journalists lay stress alone on such things as rifle-shooting on ranges and drilling and manœuvres, which, except in the case of cavalry, do not require any bravery or any extreme pertinacity at all. Success at competitive athletic sports demands both in a high degree.*

I will undertake to say that a dozen good lawn-tennis players at the end of the season in condition, and with eye and hand trained to perfection, even if they had never fired a rifle before, could be trained in ten days to shoot better than nine civilians out of ten, and simply to "romp" away from them, and from not a few "regulars" as well, in tactics and manœuvres affording real tests of endurance and "slimness." This is not mere idle "gas," but simply a plain statement of cause and effect. The words of a far more experienced authority than the present writer (the late General F. A. Walker) are worth reading in

this connection: "The favourite athletics of to-day demand coolness, self-knowledge, self-reliance. They often demand the ability to work with others, power of combination, readiness to subordinate individual impulses, selfish desires, and even personal credit to a common end. These are all qualities useful in any profession; in some professions they are of the highest value, and it cannot be gainsaid that *it is the normal effect of certain kinds of athletic sports to develop these qualities among the contestants* as well as to afford impressive examples to the minds of the spectators. So genuine does this advantage appear to me that were I superintendent of the (Military) Academy at West Point I would encourage the game of football among the cadets as *a military exercise of no mean importance.*"

The General's remark that athletic contests are sometimes so severe that "no earthly object except the saving of life or the defence of one's country would warrant them" was often strikingly exemplified at Cambridge University, where it was quite common to see half the team or more at a good football college limping about on crutches with injuries, often of a permanent kind, at the end of the "footer" season. Anyhow, my point is that the newspapers disregard altogether the vast importance of competitive sport in fostering courage, and especially what are called "initiative" and self-reliance. The *Spectator* has lately been training a company of recruits in drilling, shooting, &c., but neither the *Spectator* nor any other paper that I have seen takes any heed of the great truth that *a man may be a magnificent shot on a rifle range and yet be useless in action if he have not the courage to use his knowledge in the hour of battle.*

Striking illustrations of this fact are forthcoming at every important tennis or golf tournament, where a man of the highest skill is often beaten, in spite of vast practice, by a player greatly inferior in knowledge but superior in keeping his nerve in contests. Golfers who are noted in practice for their power of holing ten-yard putts frequently break down at putts of less than three feet when they are being closely pressed in matches. I do not know whether there be any Volunteer exercises which "make a man go" like a close race over the Henley regatta course or a five-set match at Wimbledon, and it is more than doubtful if at present any such exist. The writer is unable to conceive of anything much more monotonous and uninteresting than the regulation drill on parade grounds, and what it must be like to have several hours of that daily Heaven only knows. That the private so often calls in the aid of drink to relieve the awful tedium of such occupation, and that his brain is often dull, are no mystery to the writer. Stone-breaking is a varied and intellectual occupation by comparison. There is a degree of boredom which is directly harmful to the intellectual and nervous system, and if twelve drills in a week will not produce it in a person of reasonably active brain, I do not know what will.

No doubt some drill is inevitable, and the great thing to do in order to encourage and give zest to the Volunteer appears to me to consist in encouraging the spirit of emulation in him, not merely in rifle-shooting, drilling, &c., but in such sports—good tournament tennis, sculling, rowing, boxing, &c.—as bring out that which is in him, show definitely what he is worth in certain important respects, and foster in him in many cases that calmness in the hour of trial, and in

the presence of the King of Terrors, which is of supreme importance, but which is certainly not of necessity fostered at all on rifle ranges or parade grounds, or even in heroic assaults on Dover on Easter Mondays, with the Seabrook Hotel as the base of operations. The superiority of the bodily condition produced by contests at the above sports is beyond all argument, at least to those who have followed them in earnest.

Most sportsmen, especially those who have been with midshipmen in the Mediterranean, have seen some curious feats in letting off cartridges during the first few days of the snipe-shooting season, yet tennis players have found that after seven months without a gun they could start away after hard tennis with as much accuracy as if they had been on the moors and marshes for months. This sort of accuracy would be just as handy against Continental enemies, if necessary, as against snipe.

In case anyone is interested in the fact I may say that in Chapter IV. of my other work (" Secrets of Lawn Tennis ") I have made various other suggestions concerning Volunteers and athletic sports and games. I there did my best to advocate the establishment of covered lawn-tennis courts in Volunteer halls for winter play among the members, as an excellent means for keeping healthy and efficient during the gloomy English winter season.

CHAPTER II.

SOME TENNIS MATTERS.

IT was said of old "Vivere militare est" ("To live is to go on campaigns"). Under the conditions of business life in a modern English town the younger men might often say with truth "Vivere tennisare est" ("To live is to play tournament tennis"). I say "tournament tennis" advisedly, for the gulf between that game and ordinary garden tennis is almost as great as the gulf between croquet and hockey. At Oxford they call lawn tennis (as played in College Doubles) "Patters," *i.e.*, pat-ball. If the Oxford youth were to try more generally to win something in good tournaments they would probably alter its name to "Sloggers," or "Smashers."

In the fortunate absence of campaigns, and the hunting, shooting, &c., which are a very good peaceful substitute for them, there is nothing like good tennis for the man in an office who takes the trouble to learn the game well enough to hold his own in tournaments. I do not mean that he should foolishly neglect his calling in pursuit of the game, but merely that on those evenings and during those holidays in the year when he ceases to be merely a person in a black coat engaged in an office and becomes an energetic outdoor man, as Nature intended him at least partly to be, one of the best, because one of the most exciting and active, forms of athletics is good tennis.

It is rather a large order to attempt to generalise

about life in the suburbs of London. Its quality depends to a considerable extent on the presence or absence of certain factors which make for contentment, such as congenial spirits for company, an engrossing occupation and the making of one's pile, good health, plenty of tennis or some other outdoor sport, and a house on high ground. The last item affects people's spirits, and, consequently, their capacity, more than many of them are aware. Just as in international law there is a three-mile zone around the coast, so in the case of those who are susceptible to its climate there is a fifteen-mile zone around London within which their capacity and energy are usually half-paralysed. With the presence of some of the advantages indicated above the suburbs of London are no doubt endurable and even enjoyable, provided one does not mind an enervating climate; but when they are absent (as often happens, at least as regards health and athletics in the winter), I know of no place on earth better fitted than the suburbs of London, with their ashen grey dulness and muggy climate, to engender in the mind the pursuit of

> . . . . conclusions infinite,
> Of easy ways to die.

Nor is it needful for people who are not robust to pursue these conclusions very far, amid the damp mists of autumn, and on the usual clay soil. I know what I am talking about, for I spent several years in visiting, on the average, some forty different places annually in various parts of England and the Continent, and I say deliberately that without some such advantages as those named above (especially a good covered tennis court in the winter) life in the

suburbs of London has about as few allurements as in any place on earth.

The fact that the English usually manage to "put a good face on it" does not show that the conditions are any better than I have stated, but merely that the national "grit" comes out under all conditions of life. Hazlitt spoke of "the tough flint that lies at the back of much of the English national character," and, truly, it is well for the dweller in the suburbs of London if he possesses it, for the chances are that sooner or later he will have full opportunities for finding out if he does possess it. I do not allude here especially to financial vicissitudes, but rather to the contest with ennui and discomfort produced by fog, liver, the daily train, lack of exercise, and the deplorable but partly inevitable lack of the picturesque in the City and the large suburbs.

Readers of my last book must forgive me for again alluding to this question of covered courts, but it appears to me that, having regard to the mephitic conditions of London city life in the winter, the covered court is not a luxury but a necessity in the suburbs in the winter. As the winters are often dry near London, asphalt or gravel courts would often do quite as well as covered ones, except in wet weather.

The athletic history of the suburbs in winter is the history of Saturday and Sunday alone. But Nature's laws do not cease to act for seven months in the year, although many tennis players and others act as if they did, and the result is that periodically in many cases recourse is had to doctor, and drug, and bed, and other equally enervating refuges from the consequences of Nature's broken laws, whereas a single hour in the covered courts either in the morn-

ing, or at night by electric light, would enable the city man, leading a life which is quite as artificial and exotic on its social as on its business side, to remain well and cheerful until the fogs depart and the evenings grow long again.

The task of providing healthy physical recreation (which really *is* recreation, and not merely exercise) for the brain-fagged, train-fagged denizens of London offices, especially during the winter months, is one which is worthy of the closest attention of the best minds in the country. Plunged in darkness, which is not only thick but nauseous, as well by day as by night for many weeks in the winter, the London business man, whose sufferings from his surroundings generally increase in proportion as he exercises his wits in his calling, is probably the least-pitied man on earth, considering the amount of his discomforts. This is because in the majority of cases he keeps his feelings to himself and preserves a good exterior; but however enduring he may be, he cannot wholly escape the effects of poisonous air and insufficient exercise in the winter, as is the case with the majority, although not with all.

The ancient Egyptians had a proverb which the Londoner might do worse than consider, viz., that man has two pairs of eyes, and when one pair is open the other should be shut. In many cities in bracing climates, such as Newcastle, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Manchester, and Nottingham, brain-workers who are susceptible to the *vast effects* of climate have a far better time than in London: firstly, because the climate "bucks them up" far more than it does in London; secondly, because the fogs are not nearly so poisonous; and, thirdly, because they can get out into the country in

about ten minutes by fast trains. Therefore, the Londoner is the person who needs to be "catered for" in the matter of physical recreation even more than the citizens of lesser towns. At present the Eastbourne tournament is to most of its competitors a kind of gorgeous burial of tennis for nearly seven months in the year.

An article of a pessimistic character on this year's play appeared in the *Daily Mail* of September 18, from the pen of Mr. A. Wallis Myers. He thinks that if Brookes, Wright, or Wilding visit England next year they may carry all before them. It may be so, but they have had a sufficiently warm time of it in the past at the hands of our cracks (the best of them could only win two open singles out of seven) to make this statement very problematical.

The writer of the article concludes as follows:—"The late H. S. Mahony used to say it took ten years and a rich father to make a lawn-tennis champion. Wealthy parents there may yet be in England willing to allow their sons a free run of the courts; but even five years is a long period nowadays for a concentrated pursuit of one hobby, and in the interval the championship may slip from our grasp."

This coupling of success at lawn tennis with the alleged need for deserting one's calling for five or ten years is likely to have a most mischievous effect on the game. I believe it is the general opinion of the tennis world that the opinions of the late lamented player quoted above needed a liberal application of the salt-cellar. There are the examples of such players as Lawford, Pim, and W. Baddeley, who have won the Championship of England six times between them, to show that it is not necessary

to neglect one's means of livelihood in order to secure the highest honours at the game. It is true that there are many examples in the other direction in favour of the "specialists," but, then, it must be remembered, firstly, that in the plastic and impressionable years of youth the game is not taught at all at school in most cases; secondly, that the opportunities for winter practice for most city players have hitherto been almost nil; and, thirdly, that hitherto most of the "cracks" have kept the art of the game as closely to themselves as any trade secret. In fact, it may be said that, in the words of Talleyrand, slightly altered, "language was given to the 'cracks' to conceal their strokes." The many books that have hitherto appeared on the subject mostly contain only a few grains of useful information, and are usually vague, indefinite, and uncertain, whereas the actual experiences of lawn-tennis contests are clear, definite, and certain. The actual tactics by which the Messrs. Doherty win their matches are matters of fact and not of speculative opinion with themselves, although they suggest in their book that the latter is the case. The results of strokes and tactics in lawn-tennis matches are prompt and certain, and not matters of misty argument—at least to the players themselves. Hence the vagueness and lack of established facts in the books, combined with the usual "closeness" of the "cracks," have made it almost impossible for anyone to excel at a game in which the results of long experience count for more than in almost any other, by any other means than by picking up the whole art for himself (if so disposed) in an enormous number of matches, with a corresponding expenditure of time,

Many young players are courageous enough to beat the old hands, but as long as no correct and definite information about the tactics of the game is provided for them, the latter who remain in good condition are like the generals in fifty engagements manœuvring against beginners and recruits. If the present work does anything to supply definite information about some of the more important secrets of the game, about which the author ought at least to know something by this time, it will not have been written in vain.

In order to play tennis well, in nine cases out of ten it is necessary to have started to learn the game in the buoyant and plastic years of boyhood. When that has happened I have known a boy of nineteen to win the All-England Championship. Anyhow, I cannot imagine anything more likely to cause sensible people to discourage their sons from "a free run of the courts" than the idea that in case they become ambitious of Championship honours they will have to give up five or ten important years of life to the game and practically nothing else. Most of them would instantly say in such a case that they would rather let lawn tennis go altogether. This would be a great pity, for it is easy enough to keep up one's "form" by means of play in the summer evenings and a holiday of four or five tournaments in August if one pays a rational attention to health and exercise during the rest of the year. Lawn tennis, *when it is properly played*, is a manly and exciting form of athletic sport.

A few days before the appearance in the *Daily Mail* on September 18 of the article which I have been discussing, another one from the same pen gave some interesting details about the dietary habits of one of

the successful players of the season. In the course of it, however, the latter was represented as saying that, in his opinion, "it did not matter a straw how much one ate while playing in tournaments, as long as the organs were not impaired." To act on this statement appears to me to be the surest way to remain a mediocrity at lawn tennis, and it is noteworthy that the player who is said to have made it has been defeated in the last two Championships of England (by six sets to none) by a veteran in good condition who was giving him nearly twenty years' start. In my last book ("Secrets of Lawn Tennis") I took the opportunity of remarking that "more promising reputations have been buried among the plates and knives of the breakfast-room and the luncheon-tent than anywhere else," and that is my opinion still, after a dozen years of observation in this matter. The reader will see in Chapter XIII. that this opinion has the entire support of so eminent an authority as Mr. J. H. Taylor, the ex-champion golfer.

CHAPTER III.

THE VALUE OF PRIZES.

SOME people will probably consider the discussion of this subject as indelicate and inexpedient here. I am, however, of opinion that it will prevent a good deal of unfounded surmises and assertions, such as the outside public often express on this matter, if I state clearly the salient facts of my own experience.

Has anyone ever been "to the good" financially over lawn-tennis tournaments? Before answering this question I must remark that the common experience of those players who have visited many tournaments and who rarely accept hospitality (I did so five times in twelve years) is that in England, after paying fees, hotel and railway expenses, &c., there is not much change out of £10 per week. If Continental tournaments are included, about another £5, or more in the case of long journeys, should be added to the reckoning, but, of course, it is easy to spend much more in the same time. As this is so, the reader will not be surprised to hear that even in the case of two unbilleted players, who won seventy prizes between them in one season, the balance was considerably on the wrong side.

With regard to the question asked above, viz., whether anyone is ever "to the good" over tournaments, I should say "Yes, in certain most exceptional cases where the player nearly always wins first prizes and is nearly always 'put up.'" To win first prizes regularly at good meetings needs a precious deal of

doing, but a few players have done it at six or seven good tournaments in the year, and as some of them have been nearly always "billeted," I should say without hesitation that a few of the leading lady-players and one or two of the men have at the end of some seasons won prizes of an intrinsic value in excess of their expenses, although not by very much.

But the players, at least among the men who have achieved this rare feat, are not those who visit a large number of tournaments. The effort involved in winning at half-a-dozen of the best English tournaments from the best players is often so great that no one need grudge these players their trophies, for if the same amount of labour were expended in coal-heaving or ship-lading it would probably be more profitable. Moreover, there is the element of courage as well, which plays a large part in the winning of these valuable prizes. I do not see why anyone should attempt to interfere in the "billeting" business. The host is pleased to put up his guest and the guest is pleased with his host, and the committee are pleased with both of them. It appears to me that the L.T.A. were quite right in saying that the player's private arrangements were no concern of theirs. And the same journal which raised the amateur and virtuous hubbub in the matter contained useful "puffs" of the Casino at Monte Carlo in the same issues in which it denounced three or four weeks' hospitality during the season for the active and strenuous lawn-tennis players.

My own opinion about lawn tennis is that it is easy enough to spend £6,000 or £7,000 without any unusual extravagance if one plays throughout several seasons at home and abroad without any "billeting," and I

have no doubt others would agree with me. But, on the other hand, one sees an immense amount of actual unvarnished life, at least in the tennis competitions, although a man with plenty of money in his pocket at good hotels necessarily sees the facts of existence tinged with a certain *couleur de rose*, without previous experience of the struggle for the survival of the fittest. Anyhow, it is far better than merely "slacking about" on a "grand tour."

The actual as compared with the nominal value of lawn-tennis prizes is often so great as (in the words of a famous legal definition) "to shock the conscience." For example, some years ago a prospectus of a foreign tournament was sent to the Queen's Club announcing that various cups presented by a well-known Danish personage would be offered for competition, including one of the value of £70 for the Open Singles. I went there and "annexed" that cup, after playing Ritchie for two hours and a half, and losing incidentally about 5lb. in weight in the process. I also won another cup there of the nominal value of £20. On my return to England I had the curiosity to ask two experts about them. The first one said that the £70 cup was worth a sovereign to him, and the second one hit on the same figure for the £20 cup. In 1903 I went to a Swiss tournament (run by a late manager of the Casino at Monte Carlo), where a £20 cup (also presented by somebody) was advertised for the Open Singles. Again I made it my own, and again I took it—this time to a Swiss expert, who stated that the intrinsic value of the cup was 48 francs. The workmanship was trifling. These were by far the most valuable trophies (*on paper*) that I ever won. After this experience I considered

that a valuation of fifty shillings for a Swedish trophy nominally worth £14 showed quite an extravagant percentage of value to cost. To sum up, the actual valuations I received for these four prizes amounted to £6 10s. altogether, instead of the *nominal* valuations of £124.

It is more or less the same story (although not nearly so bad) in this country, where, as a rule, one gets far better value for the money than anywhere in Europe. But, in the first place, the tournament player is mostly considered "fair game" both by prize committees and by jewellers. With regard to the latter I may merely observe that my experience of the luxury trades is that on the average there is a far greater difference between value and cost than in the case of trading in useful or necessary goods, although jewellers, of course, sell many useful things beside "tiaras," &c.

With regard to the value of the prizes there are at present certain execrable rules of etiquette, needless to say enforced at the expense of the prize-winners, whereby the first prize in a Double or Mixed handicap rarely or never exceeds £4 or £5, and that of a Single handicap rarely exceeds £7 and never exceeds £10. The first prize in Open Singles very rarely exceeds £10, and averages less. . If tournament committees had to play through these events themselves, and knew what it was like to play seven or eight close matches in them, they would not be quite so keen on cutting down the value of these prizes. I remember winning a Double handicap in which 106 players were competing, and after toiling for five days through the competition I received an "order" for £3 or £4 on a local jeweller. I was not playing for the "order." No one in his

senses would do so. But I am quite clear that its amount was ridiculous. Many people in ordinary life would have to go to bed for a week afterwards if they had the exertion of going through one of those big handicaps.

At another tournament on the South coast the players attract "gates" of 4,000 spectators at a time, during the week, and usually at least 130 of them enter in each large handicap at 5s. per head. Although it is they who draw the people, the management take about £14 out of the money which the players subscribe in these competitions, whereas it ought certainly to be entirely devoted to prizes. Those who play much lawn tennis necessarily play, except in a few cases, primarily for the sake of the excitement and emulation and grand physical condition which are the concomitants of the game, but that is no reason why they should be "rooked" so often over their usually hard-earned prizes. Liberality in prizes is apparently regarded as a deadly sin at present. Having quitted the arena of English lawn tennis I can speak freely on the subject.

CHAPTER IV.

THE "LAWN TENNIS GUIDE."

MANY of the bookstalls in the United Kingdom during the late season have displayed a sixpenny "Lawn Tennis Guide" to "the strokes and science of the game," written by Mr. P. A. Vaile and published by a firm of racquet-makers—whose racquets Mr. Vaile has discovered by a remarkable coincidence to be the best on the market. The outer cover of the book is adorned with an illustration of Mr. Vaile in the act of serving the plain overhead service (reproduced here in Plate 1), which constitutes in the eye of a practical lawn-tennis player one of the most comical things in the whole book. The picture on the cover of the "Guide" is copied from Plate 12 in it, which is marked "Forehand Service."

With regard to this picture I may remark here: first, that by sticking the spare arm out in that way a player would inevitably fracture it if it happened to be necessary to place the service *towards the left*, as it constantly *is* necessary; secondly, that in one of Mr. Vaile's other books there are more than twenty illustrations of the best-known crack players serving with the spare arm necessarily tucked up out of the way, because they knew better than to run the risk of inflicting upon themselves grievous bodily harm; thirdly, that this attitude can only be assumed at all by means of a baulking, distracting, and utterly superfluous act of legerdemain, and it is contradicted by a gilt illustra-

Not Guaranteed.

Plate I. Perilous position of the Spare Arm in Serving.
After P. A. Vaile (on the cover of the "Lawn Tennis Guide").

Plate 2. H. L. Doherty's attitude in serving (much less rare than that of Plate I.) Note the position of the Spare Arm.

tion of R. F. Doherty on the outside cover of one of Mr. Vaile's other books; fourthly, that by looking at the attitude of H. L. Doherty in Plate 2 the reader can see at a glance the absurdity of Plate 1. There is no branch of the great game of lawn tennis on which Mr. Vaile has not in my opinion made remarks of a confusing and misleading character. If anyone thinks that the American services and the "lifting drive" form an exception to this rule I refer such to Chapter IX. His works have been issued with all the help towards their recognition as authorities on the game which patronage and publication can give them, and it is useless to shut one's eyes to the fact that unless the inaccuracies with which they abound are exposed lawn tennis will enjoy the unique distinction among English games of possessing a leading authority who does not know how to play it.

But it is not solely for the purpose of exploding that which turns out under scrutiny to be nothing more nor less than an absurd literary hoax that my present labours have been inspired. There are, fortunately, but few writers who have laboured more industriously than Mr. Vaile under the cover of friendly colonial criticism to disparage, decry, and depreciate the British nation. If anyone doubts it, let him note the flavour of the articles entitled "Where John Bull Fails," &c., published last spring in *Fry's Magazine*. I am aware that to do this by taking advantage of our national tendency to censure ourselves and to believe anyone who censures us about anything is regarded as a great and blessed work by many in this country, for otherwise we should not see the author of those articles mentioned above and others like them publicly patronised by a Judge and a Bishop, among others.

because there the ability to place the ball quickly into a narrow space, to start to run for the net instantly after driving (impossible with the lifting drive), and to "slam" the return of the service within an inch or two of the top of the net in order to force one's opponent to volley underhand, is constantly proved to be the chief factor of success. The whole career of S. H. Smith has been one long demonstration of the fact that *it is hard hitting and not spinning or cutting of the ball which chiefly wins matches.* There may or may not be some slight "spin" on some of his drives, but it is the force, and not the rotation, which is the chief thing.

Mr. Vaile, the extent of whose knowledge of tournament tennis will become sufficiently clear by the illustrations in this book, has started nothing more nor less than an energetic campaign against the chief source of English strength at the game, viz., hard "knock-out" driving from the shoulder. "It is a fact," he says, "that the most important strokes in modern lawn tennis are played with cut." I hope that the foreign and Colonial players who come here after the Davis Cup will believe him and follow his advice. The reader will gather elsewhere in this chapter that I do not exactly underrate the American service, but this does not blind me to the fact that it is only a subsidiary manœuvre in the game, and not an essential one, as Mr. H. L. Doherty showed when he won the Championship of 1905 (by three sets to nil) from the best player in Australasia, who possessed all kinds of twist services. He also showed it again and again in America and in the Davis Cup matches here.

Mr. Vaile has done his utmost to exaggerate the

actual measure of success which Brookes (partly through being left-handed) obtained in England, and one of the chief grounds for his praise of him is that "Wright and Brookes rarely, if ever, hit a ball with a plain-face racquet." If that be so, it accounts for the fact that they were both beaten in the Championship, by three sets to one and three sets to nil. He also asserts that "three-quarters of the modern game consists of cut strokes." I, on the other hand, say that in matches against really sound drivers about one-quarter is the actual proportion, and that if in future the English players (misled by the patronage of a lawyer and an ecclesiastic who have never attempted to defeat a third-rate tournament player in their lives) give the "cut" strokes this exaggerated importance at the expense of plain hard hitting, they will not keep the Davis Cup very long in the country. No more ludicrous statement (to a practical player) could have been made by Mr. Vaile than that the cut service insures "greater accuracy in placing." The very fact of the cut implies distortion from exact aiming.

In accordance with his intention indicated above, Mr. Vaile also says: "The lifting drive" (another "cut" stroke) "is unquestionably the most valuable ground stroke in modern tennis." I say that, for the following reasons, it unquestionably is *not*. First, it is a mechanical impossibility to strike a ball with *a glancing blow* (which is necessarily implied in the "lifting" drive) with anything like the force which can be put into *a straight blow from the shoulder* on a ball of an average bounce. Mr. Parmly Paret, echoed as usual by Mr. Vaile, started the contrary idea, but I do not think that an elementary fact of dynamics which Messrs. Gore and Smith (among others) illustrate fifty

times in every match they play needs any further explanation. It would be just as ridiculous to assert that one could smash a ball with cut harder than with a plain-face racquet. *If the ball bounces an average height a man like Smith can drive it with every ounce of strength he possesses and yet keep it in court.* It is also a misuse of language to say that one hits the ball harder in the lifting drive when a great part of the force of the blow (as shown in Mr. Vaile's diagrams) is expended in the air above the ball. Secondly, the "lifting" drive often, as Mr. Vaile admits, rises 2ft. above the net, which would be fatal in a first-class Double, where players are quick in following up their service, because a drive of that elevation would be promptly slaughtered, "lift" and all, in most cases. Thirdly, *one cannot start to run forward so quickly after making it as after a plain-face drive*, which is often essential to success. Fourthly, according to Mr. Vaile's own statement, "the sudden descent of the 'lifting' drive allows it to get up and be played without difficulty unless it happens to be a very hot one." I am quite aware that it is a most ingenious and useful stroke (especially in a Single), but I am certain that its value (especially for Double play) has been inordinately exaggerated by Mr. Vaile. One of the best exponents of it ever seen (viz., de Borman) has been invariably defeated by a player of the calibre of Ritchie.

If Mr. Vaile succeeds in "bluffing" the English into abandoning their fine shoulder hitting and into playing "cuts" and "chops" and "twists" in nearly every case in its place, his labours will not have been in vain. He also gravely speaks of "chopping from the base-line," and even mentions "a fine player" (as

usual, at the Antipodes) who "used the chop as a staple stroke instead of a forehand drive." There would be rather a rush for that man among the first-class net volleyers here if he happened to enter at tournaments. The chop is all right in its place, but Heaven help anyone who relied on it instead of a drive at a good English tournament! The hard hits may, or may not, sometimes impart "spin" or rotation to the ball, but the fact remains that *it is the force and not the "spin" which is the most essential and indispensable element.*

I will endeavour to make my meaning clear. It is quite possible for a player who drives a comparatively soft ball off the ground to beat a hard driver sometimes, and to do it partly by means of short, cut volleys at the net which are not hard hit, but it is practically impossible for him to do it unless he possesses much severity in smashing overhead balls and in serving, and can at the same time get a good length on his moderate-paced drives. This was my own case exactly in playing men with such ground-strokes as those of S. H. Smith, Hillyard, Eaves, and Ritchie, all of whom I have defeated in Open Singles. In spite of all the "cuts" and "spins" and tactics, it would have been absolutely impossible for me to defeat these players (or to get within two points of defeating Gore at Beckenham) if I had not chiefly relied on a very fast overhead service, and hard-hit "smashes" from all parts of the court. In other words, the relative importance of any amount of "cuts" or "chops" to hard hitting in winning matches is very small *when taken by itself*, but when combined with hard hitting, at least in one department of the game, it at once becomes formidable. S. H. Smith, on force, and nothing else, knocked out two American champions in one week in

1905 at Wimbledon (armed with American and reverse American services) without losing a set, and afterwards beat N. E. Brookes, the Australian high priest of spinning services, at Edgbaston. E. R. Allen's game is also a fact which has shown in countless instances that force is by far the most indispensable thing about first-class tennis, although a moderate amount of force and a great deal of guile will often beat a great deal of force and no guile. I shall, therefore, be readily understood when I say that as the result of twelve years' experience I absolutely disagree with Mr. Vaile's assertion that *three-fourths of the game of lawn tennis* will in the future consist of "cut" strokes, and I am strongly of opinion that such a statement tends directly to ruin a great game by introducing a finicking style of play and discouraging hard hitting.

In the course of my tennis career in England I met with many defeats and but few victories (except in first-class handicaps) among the really first-class players. When I look at the 118 portraits of Mr. Vaile playing tennis strokes, and especially when I read his advice about them, I am constantly reminded of the words of a certain personage about Sir Hudson Lowe: "Ah, if I had only had to deal with adversaries such as this I should not be here [at St. Helena] now."

It is interesting to note here that whereas No. 10 of the series to which the "Lawn Tennis Guide" belongs consists of Braid on Golf and No. 12 of Ranjitsinhji on Cricket, No. 11 consists of—Vaile on Lawn Tennis. The reason is that hitherto the cracks have had so much to do to beat the many awkward opponents whom they come across that they have had very little time for studying their own methods of

play. It is often hard enough to win one's matches at all without giving any correct description of the way in which it was done.

I hope I have now made it clear that the "spinning ball" business is not the most important thing in the game, but only a very useful adjunct, although Mr. Vaile attempts to reverse these proportions. Personally, I have never under-rated the importance of the American service since I had the pleasure of trying to return it on a wet Scotch court at Moffat in 1904. It is an unfortunate fact that until recently the crack players in England have relied exclusively on force and placing in their service, and have neglected the overhead twists altogether. I may as well state my own convictions clearly on this subject. If a man only plays lawn tennis at rare intervals, or if he possesses a placid and quiescent sort of brain, he may go on serving the plain overhead service for many years without getting sick of it, as is the case with various well-known players, some of whom are fond of being photographed with the ball about 10ft. up in the air and their backs in a kind of crescent shape like the new moon. Those players, however, who possess more irritable nerves, and are more liable to the insidious approaches of *ennui*, often find, as I have found, that the plain overhead service after a time becomes so monotonous that they could not face another week of it without a shudder. The variety and activity and excitement involved in the rest of the game give it an almost continuous zest, but the service becomes too monotonous. During a large part of my last season I never went on to the court without feeling thoroughly sick of the plain overhead service before I started.

Mr. Vaile was sharp enough to see that the great defect in our game (although not a fundamental defect as regards the winning of matches) was our total neglect of the overhead twist services, and by means of his strong point, viz., a smattering of the mechanics of a spinning ball, he successfully set up as a great authority on a game which he cannot play. He has himself stated in one of his books that which many readers of his books know already, viz., that he is "a lawn tennis failure."

The "Lawn Tennis Guide" contains 73 photographs purporting to show the way to play lawn tennis. I have found Mr. Vaile's blunders very convenient pegs on which to hang my exposition of the principles of the game and have often adopted the plan first of reproducing his attitude for making the various strokes and then of reproducing that which is in many cases the attitude of the best English cracks, so that the reader can see exactly where we differ. One noticeable feature about the "Lawn Tennis Guide" is the altered expression of the various "Vailes" in this latest gallery of portraits. One looks in vain for that vaunting expression, while playing a backhand stroke (usually in an impossible position), suggestive of Xerxes before the battle of Marathon, and for that look of grim resolve in playing a forehand lob, like Antony about to fall upon his sword, which marked so many of the previous "Vailes," and they wear instead a solemn and somewhat sulky expression.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHOICE OF A RACQUET, &c.

THE racquet is the tool, the weapon, and the instrument of a lawn-tennis player, and I need hardly say that a knowledge of the kind which really suits him best is invaluable. Tournament players get plenty of opportunities for developing their judgment about instruments which they use every day, and of which they often use twelve or fifteen in a year. For it is well known to the great majority of the cracks that a very tight racquet, especially when made with very thin gut, is so great an advantage in itself that many of them have a new one after every fortnight of hard tournament play, or even oftener if the ground is wet. The reason why they do this is that the tight gut saves them much exertion in hitting, enables them to make faster strokes, and is far better for every kind of cut stroke. I have noted the effect on one's play hundreds of times of using a racquet till it becomes too slack. Mr. Vaile makes the assertion that slack stringing is an advantage because it *allows the ball to dwell upon the face of the racquet.* I need hardly say that in "cutting" or hard hitting one does not want it to "dwell" there very long. As for cut strokes, I have not the least hesitation in saying that *they are much easier and more effective with tight than with slack gut.* It is true that there have been cases of players doing well with worn-out bats, but that merely

shows that after all it is the quality of the player and not of the bat which chiefly wins matches. Mr. Vaile's advice about slack racquets is quite on a par with his advice about small handles, beer-drinking for training, and tight, flimsy shoes.

There are endless opportunities for a player to find out the facts about a weapon he is always putting to the proof. The consistent volleyer, however, is much more dependent on the finer qualities of a racquet than a base-line driver, especially if he happen to possess the right sort of "hands" or touch for low volleying close to the net across the court. To this type of player a clumsy or ill-balanced racquet will be a far greater handicap than to a plain slogger whose volleys mostly consist of smashes. The more delicate the strokes a player makes, the more he appreciates a finely-balanced, finely-finished, and scientifically-constructed bat, and the more his game suffers from an ordinary or clumsy instrument.

The most important points to be considered in choosing a bat are, first, the size and shape of the handle; secondly, the disposition of weight in the bat (especially the weighting of the head); thirdly, the quality of the gut; and, fourthly, the shape of the "head" of the bat.

With regard to the handle, it is no doubt true, within certain limits, that "what is one man's grip is another man's poison." For example, the handles used by Messrs. Hillyard and Smith would reduce my game to comparative "harmlessness" if I had to use them. The best plan for a novice in this case is to pay attention to the general experience of the majority of a body of players, many of whom have a bat in their hand nearly every day throughout the season. That

experience may be said roughly to be that an average player will get the best results from a bat with a handle not less than five and a half inches in circumference. If one gets too large a handle, such as the barge-pole adopted by the late H. S. Mahony in his latter years, it is easy enough to find out one's mistake owing to the fact that such a handle greatly interferes with one's usual forehand return of the service (among other things), making one clumsy and slow with that stroke. But although it is easy enough to "shave" a handle which is too big, one cannot enlarge the wood of too small a handle. According to my experience there is no greater curse in lawn tennis, or one more fatal to success, than a handle which is too small. As I have remarked elsewhere (in "Lifting the Veil"), "Just before any stroke is made the hand and fingers instinctively tighten the grip of the handle; consequently, if they have to contract on a small handle, they take longer to do it, and no such sense of firmness is obtained as in the case of a handle which just fills the grasp."

After paying much attention to this subject I have come to the conclusion that the best handle is one which is of such a size and smooth shape (without any sharp angles) that one is able to *forget that it is in the hand when one is playing the stroke.* In other words, it is one which does not obtrude its presence on us at all, as it inevitably will if it be too large or too small or too angular. To discover the right size and shape of handle for one's particular game is a task which requires close observation of the results of play and of comfort with various sizes, but it is a task which is indispensable for anyone who desires to excel at the game.

The disposition of the weight of the bat, whether in the handle or the head, is a matter which vitally affects success in matches. No doubt tastes differ much with regard to it, but I believe it may be said that of the select few who are really fine "killers" of overhead balls from all parts of the court, however far back, the great majority find a bat with the weight in the head a sheer necessity for these strokes. Moreover, Mr. Vaile's assertion that 14oz., not 14½oz., is the best average weight for a racquet is flatly opposed to the experience of most of these players, most of whom know perfectly well by hundreds of tests that they cannot "smash" nearly so well with a bat of 14oz. as with one of 14½oz. Personally, I find also that I cannot drive the ball properly on the forehand with a bat which is light in the head or less than 14½oz. in weight; just as playing billiards with a light cue spoils about half my strokes. With a light-headed racquet I never know where the ball is going.

Thirdly, with regard to the kind of gut with which the bat is strung, although it does not matter much to a base-line player whether the gut be thick or thin, as long as it is tight, I have always found that in playing cut cross-volleys at the net, and all other strokes as well, *very thin gut tightly strung is much better than ordinary gut.* As it soon wears out, most people think that thin gut is extravagant, but on the other hand, if one is anxious to win a final round tight thin gut affords a volleyer such an advantage that it does not matter if one "wears out" even a brand-new racquet on a damp court in a single afternoon, as long as one wins the match, and I know to my cost that a good racquet often makes the difference between success and defeat; moreover, if a player

knows how to put two or three new strings for himself into a bat there is no need to fear small breakages with thin gut, and racquet-makers will always take trouble to keep his wants supplied in this matter if he plays much.

With regard to the choice of a racquet-maker, I spent two entire seasons experimenting with various racquets other than those of Messrs. Slazenger, and at the end of it my candid opinion is that in the case of players whose strokes are much affected by the balance and "finish" of a bat the best Slazenger bats (provided a player takes the trouble to find out exactly what kind of bat suits him) are at present worth at least "half-fifteen," and possibly more, to the man who uses them. This is because their construction represents more "brains" and many more experiments than that of the other bats, which, at least, I have come across. I have an idea that before long we shall see light and hollow metal frames for bats, which will bear any amount of re-stringing, and will be almost as durable as our trusty "cleeks" and "lofters" at golf. If so, it will vastly lessen the expense of the game to the ordinary player.

I must say a word here on a tennis matter which is prosaic but has a vast effect on a player's comfort and efficiency, viz., shoes. Mr. Vaile says: "The average player uses shoes that are much too heavy. Use *the lightest and tightest shoe* that you possibly can with comfort." The volleying game in lawn tennis requires the making of all kinds of sudden turns and twists at lightning speed during the "rests" of volleys. If, then, on a slippery or sticky English grass court one is shod in a sort of gymnasium shoe, as in the Vaile photographs, I say, advisedly, that it will

be little less than a miracle if a man goes through a fortnight's hard play without a sprain of the ankle (causing several weeks of "laying-up") through the sudden bending-over of the foot outwards. I have proved it in my own experience. A sprained ankle is not a matter of argument, and the risk of it with a light and flimsy shoe on an English court is increased tenfold, especially if the player does any good volleying. I am no advocate for the lace-boots with rubber soles which some of the cracks use, but the experience of nearly all the leading players has been that a substantial rubber sole is practically a necessity.

With regard to "steel points," which on anything but a very dry court mean a great gain to a volleyer, and also to a hard driver (such as Smith, who *always* wears them), I may say that if any of my readers are golfers who rather "fancy" their driving, they will probably find that the use of tennis steel points on a medal day, although extravagant, will mean the gain of several strokes through the advantage obtained in driving. They are, of course, much lighter than golfing shoes, and yet they grip the ground perfectly. Players who carefully watch Smith's drive will, I think, agree with me that the steel points have a good deal to do with it. Of course they are only of use on grass courts.

With regard to the tight shoe which Mr. Vaile advocates, I have no hesitation in saying that I know of nothing which more certainly affects one's mental and nervous system adversely, while playing, than a tight shoe. *In all hard matches the foot swells considerably with the heat*, so that a shoe which was comfortable enough at first becomes too small. Too loose a shoe will, of course, impede one's pace and produce

blisters by means of friction, but a tight one is usually fatal.

A propos de bottes, as the French say, I may remark that the patience of the better classes of the nation in carrying a load of about half a yard of thick and heavy cloth on their heads while taking outdoor exercise does more credit to their endurance than their sagacity. Anyone who has tried the effect of a day on the moors, for example, with a cap of the soft, silky, or hairy material, light as a feather, such as is sold on the Continent, will marvel how people can stand another day of the heavy, burdensome sort of head-blanket which is commonly worn for motoring, golfing, shooting, etc. No doubt it is mainly due to the ignorance both of the hatters and the public, for one cap looks just as smart as the other, and is about as durable. It is possible to forget the existence of a cap of this sort when one is wearing it, whereas the English style of cap obtrudes its presence more and more every hour that one is out. I have come across a good Parisian maker of these caps, one or two at Lucerne, one in Buda-Pesth, and one at Homburg who sells at about one-third of the Parisian price. They are common enough in Germany.

Many a player (like the writer) has lost important matches through the discomfort caused by an unsuitable kind of waistband, such as a silk scarf, which might do well enough for a comparatively sedentary game like a Double or a Mixed, but which in a long and violent Single match causes an amount of discomfort, and often of actual loss of strokes and sets, which no one would believe who has not experienced how effectually any such thing "puts a player off" during violent and exciting exertions. I have no hesitation in

saying that a good solid leather belt at least two inches broad (which never wears out) has more to do with success by keeping a player free from discomfort than an onlooker would readily imagine. Leather is far better than indiarubber, in my opinion, because it does not alter or wear out easily. The greatest care should be taken to get the holes in the leather made in exactly the right places, so that the belt is neither too tight nor too loose, as so much of one's comfort, and, indeed, efficiency, depends on this. "There is nothing like leather."

I need hardly say that I am no follower of the "flapping sleeve" quartette of players, the Dohertys and the Allens (*vide*, for example, Plate 6), and think that those who are must be proof against being *put off* by a constant minor discomfort while playing.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BACKHAND STROKES.

I NOW come to the subject of the backhand strokes. In my other two books on tennis I have briefly alluded to three different kinds of backhand strokes with which a player is constantly confronted in match-play, to either make or miss them. "Just what" these strokes are (as the Americans say) may be seen by a glance at the accompanying diagram, which applies to the strokes of right-handed and not of left-handed players. The line A-B shows the cross-court backhand drive, the line A-C shows the straight backhand drive, and the line D-E the backhand stroke out to the left, or the "on." This stroke cannot exactly be called a drive, although it is very useful.

Now, those who are acquainted with the play of the first-class backhand drivers in England, such as E. R. Allen (who is about the best model of them all), R. F. and H. L. Doherty, F. L. Riseley, Eaves, Hillyard, Roper Barrett, Black, C. G. Allen, and B. Hillyard know well enough that in order to obtain a complete follow-through, and consequently, *a long finish* to the cross-court drive A-B, it is necessary to produce a semicircular "body-swing," or rotation of the shoulders and trunk from left to right, as one plays the stroke. By this means the momentum derived from the mass of the body is imparted to the

drive, and, consequently, when the ball strikes the ground, instead of "getting up and looking at" one's opponent it flies swiftly off at an extremely acute angle, which often renders its return difficult or impossible. It is this flight of the ball after the bounce

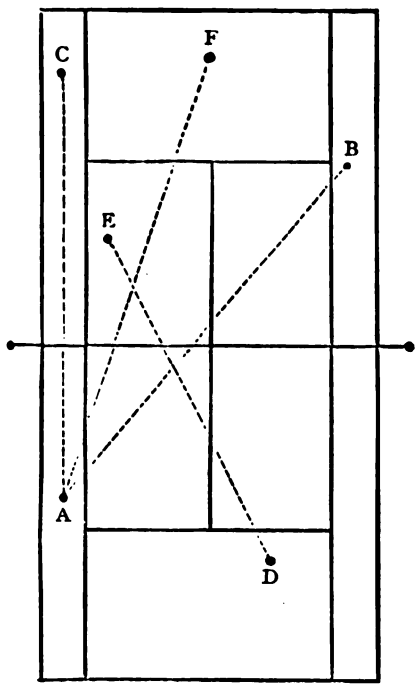


Diagram showing different kinds of backhand strokes.

which shows most clearly whether the player has followed the stroke through properly or not, as may be seen by anyone who watches the remarkable angle at which J. M. Boucher's forehand drives travel after they have bounced. I am quite aware that the wrist

plays a highly important part in the production of the stroke down A-B (even more than in the other two strokes), but it is impossible to disregard the importance of the swing-round of the shoulders after the ball has been struck.

I stated in one of my other books that the movement of the body when this stroke is made is the same as that of a man who cuts grass with a scythe. Hence, Mr. Vaile denounces it as *a mowing stroke*. I, however, make bold to assert: first, that semi-circular body-swing is essential for severity in this case; and, secondly, that it is physically impossible to finish out the follow-through of this cross-court stroke unless it is played with the racquet in, or nearly in, a horizontal position. The reader should bear this in mind, as it becomes important later on.

With regard to the straight backhand drive down the line A-C in the diagram, the position of the racquet is entirely different from its position in the cross-court drive, owing to the fact that in order that the stroke may be played down the court the rotation of the body which would *necessarily pull it out of its desired course* must be entirely absent. Hence, one finishes the stroke (when played with a horizontal racquet) with the racquet at arm's length, and parallel with the body (as described in "Passing Strokes," stroke No. 7, in "Secrets of Lawn Tennis"), and *several feet farther to the left* (for a right-handed player) *than in the case of the cross-court drive* (see Plate 11). The finish with a vertical racquet may be seen on Plate 16.

It is, of course, quite true that the strokes down A-B and A-C represent the most marked type of their species, and that a great many strokes which present themselves for execution are between the two, as, for

example, the stroke down A-F, which requires a swing of the body through a small part of a circle, but not nearly so far as in the case of the stroke A-B. This, however, does not alter the fact that the actual types of the two strokes, as shown by the lines A-B and A-C, are quite distinct.

As regards the backhand stroke out to the left (to the right in my case), down the line D-E (which Eaves plays very well), there is again *necessarily* no trunk rotation of the kind used in the cross-court drive, for the same reason as in the last case, but the face of the horizontal racquet is drawn across the ball from left to right with a sharp cut, in which the wrist plays the chief part. The position of the racquet at the end of this backhand stroke is almost as different from its position at the finish of the backhand cross-stroke as chalk is from cheese. Hence the use of the indefinite term "backhand stroke," as in the Vaile "Guide," is most misleading to a learner without any explanation of the kind of backhand stroke referred to, inasmuch as they are played and finished in quite different ways. For example, in a recent number of *Fry's Magazine* Mr. Vaile said indefinitely, "The English backhand stroke is finished behind the body," to which I reply that in the case of the straight drive down A-C, and the stroke down D-E, this is not the fact.

The best model in England for the backhand strokes is, in my opinion, E. R. Allen, and anyone who has watched him at any of the 250 or more tournaments in which he has competed in the last eighteen years will remember how different is his carefully-measured swing-back before playing the stroke from the attitude of Mr. Vaile, with his racquet cocked up over his left shoulder. In fact, the contrast all the way through

Plate 3. Position at Start of Backhand Drive across Court.

the book between the way players like Roper Barrett and E. R. Allen play the strokes and the way P. A. Vaile describes them is so great that it has supplied one of the main reasons for the appearance of the present work.

It is no doubt quite true that a very effective *straight* backhand drive can be produced with the racquet held head downwards. Dwight Davis, in particular, used to produce a magnificent (but very erratic) straight drive in this way. But it is a physical impossibility to play the stroke A-B, marked in the diagram above, with any body-swing in it, when the racquet is held in this way. In fact, it is impossible to play the stroke A-B at all with the racquet in this position, unless one can get right round the ball, to turn it into a straight drive, and when one is careering from side to side of the court in a long rally this is often impossible.

Practically every past and present English player with a fine backhand, from Pim and Ernest Renshaw down to the Dohertys, Allen, and Eaves (with the exception of Lewis), has played all classes of backhand stroke mainly with the racquet in a horizontal position. Although no doubt the "Davis" drive has great possibilities in it for straight strokes, the reason why the players mentioned above use the horizontal racquet in general is that many backhand strokes are impossible with the vertical bat.

Plate 3 shows the position of the body and racquet at the start of the backhand drive across court. The upper part of the body is swung round in a corkscrew fashion as far as it will go with comfort, while the legs and feet may be said roughly to face straight down the court. Care should be taken to place the feet

so that the "stance" may be kept firm nearly to the finish of the stroke, although if it be played with great force there will be some displacement of the stance at the finish, which will not in any way prejudice the effect of the drive. The "rush" of lawn tennis makes the finishes of the strokes much less rigid than at golf.

The *low position of the racquet at the start* should be particularly noted. The racquet can thereby be swung straight on to the work with infinitely greater accuracy than in the case of the position in Plate 47 of the "Lawn Tennis Guide" (imitated in Plate 4), where the length of the downward swing is often (although not invariably) fatal to accuracy. The momentum obtained by the position of the racquet in Plate 3 is also amply sufficient for the stroke. Let the reader who has watched E. R. Allen compare his attitude with that of Plate 4. But then E. R. Allen is a practical tennis-player.

The next Plate (No. 5) shows the position at the finish of the backhand drive across the court. The stroke is effected mainly by causing the shoulders and trunk to regain their natural position, so that the uncoiling of them acts like a spring. The reader should note particularly the fact that owing to the physical laws which must be obeyed if one desires to return the ball into court, and not merely to strike theatrical attitudes before a camera, it is necessary in finishing the follow-through of the backhand drive *across court* that the head of the racquet *at the actual finish* shall be, in general, not more than from 4½ft. to 5ft. from the ground. If it be raised more than that, even by inches, it becomes physically impossible to keep the drive in court, provided one is actually following-through and not merely flourishing after the finish,

Not Guaranteed.

Plate 4. Start for the same Stroke, according to P. A

Plate 5. Position at the actual Finish of a Backhand across Court.

Plate 6. Flourish after the Finish of a Backhand Drive across Court. Note the expression of the Right Sleeve. After R. F. Doherty and P. A. Vaile.

Plate 7. Heroic but impossible Finish of the Follow-through of a Backhand Drive across Court. After P. A. Vaile.

One well-known crack (R. F. Doherty) figures in one of Mr. Vaile's books ("Great Lawn-Tennis Players," Plate 112) in an attitude for the finish of this stroke which does not represent the position of the racquet at the finish at all, but a misleading "gallery" flourish after the finish. The reader will understand this by looking at Plate 6. An actual "follow-through" into that position would have sent the ball far away behind the player's back. The crossing of the legs, as shown in this photograph, might well happen to any player in the actual "rush" of a good match, and would not necessarily spoil the drive at all. As a matter of fact, it is well known to thousands of spectators in Europe and America that R. F. Doherty's backhand drive across court, especially in returning service out of the left court, is about the fastest and most correct that has ever been seen. We, therefore, naturally find Mr. Vaile, after inserting what he himself states is a copy of R. F. Doherty's attitude in playing this stroke, remarking, "*It is a weak, defensive shot, instead of, as it should be, a strong natural winner.*"

But in Plate 14 of "Modern Lawn Tennis" Mr. Vaile inserted a photograph of himself playing the same stroke (reproduced here in Plate 7) in an attitude which shows that he knew nothing about the backhand drive across court.

The great difference between many of Mr. Vaile's attitudes and those of the "cracks" is due to the fact that, unlike them, he was untrammelled in producing them by any petty considerations of prudence about keeping the ball in court, but, with no other opponent than the photographer, could give free scope to his taste for the picturesque. When a man's strokes are not hampered by such trivialities as base-lines he can

produce some grand spectacular though imaginary "finishes."

The original of this picture (Plate 7) was marked "Finish of Backhand Drive *across court*, with full body-weight [no doubt about that] and clean follow-through." Now, if there *had* been a clean follow-through into that position the ball would simply have disappeared over the tea-tent or some such place away to the right (my left) at an altitude of about 60yds. Moreover, the reader will see clearly that in order to finish the follow-through *across the court* the racquet would have to be about another 2ft. further round to my left. These strokes can often be seen several times a minute by anyone who cares to watch H. L. Doherty, or E. R. Allen, or G. W. Hillyard, or anyone with a good backhand. My contention then briefly about Plate 7 is that (1) the finish is several feet too high; (2) that as a cross-court drive it ought to be about 2ft. further round my left side. The stroke often occurs several times per minute in good matches.

Mr. Vaile, having been apprised of the tell-tale blunders of this picture, produced a photograph of himself in Plate 56 of the "Guide" with the legs uncrossed, and in a position which *can only be obtained at the finish of that cross-court backhand stroke by means of the semicircular swing he denounces*, and then produced a Plate of the same stroke—practically the same as that of Plate 5 here—by R. F. Doherty (of all people in the world) with the legs crossed, and announced, as I have mentioned above, that it is "a weak defensive shot, instead of a strong natural winner." I have had occasion often enough in the past to wish that the English stroke *had* been

Plate 8. Alleged position for the "English Backhand Stroke" (for Driving). It is really that of a low Backhand Volley. After P. A. Vaile.

Plate 9. Backhand Drive across Court of a high bounding ball. The first part of the Stroke is made chiefly with the Arm and Wrist, but the Shoulder is used in the latter part.

"a weak defensive shot." Moreover, the comical part about this photograph (represented here by Plate 5) is that it purports to be the *finish* of the "English backhand stroke" after the *beginning* which is given here in Plate 8, and which he labels "English Backhand Stroke." If the reader attempts to begin a backhand drive in the attitude of Plate 8 (which is really that of a very low backhand volley), and to finish it in that of Plate 5, and yet keep the ball in court, he will fully appreciate Mr. Vaile's value as a "lawn-tennis guide." Many of the English "cracks" have been playing backhand strokes about the country for the last twelve or fifteen years, so I should imagine that the caricature of them in Plate 8 would soon be recognised as such by many people.

Plate 9 shows the position of the racquet as the ball is struck in a cross-court backhand drive off a high-bounding ball such as one often has to deal with on a dry grass court, or on gravel, or after a lob has bounced on any sort of court. This stroke, which J. Pim used to exhibit in great perfection, shows the folly of asserting in a dogmatic way that "it is a cardinal rule that the racquet and the forearm should be in line." In various strokes, including some backhand volleys, two photographs of the Dohertys mentioned below show that this is the exact opposite of the truth. The fact that in England we are sufficiently acquainted with the rudiments of the game to play strokes such as this with the racquet in the position indicated is no doubt the source of Mr. Vaile's denunciations of the "English" angle made by the arm and the racquet. The finish of the stroke is very similar to that shown in Plate 3.

With regard to the position of the racquet in this

Plate, I may say that it is confirmed by a published photograph of A. W. Gore playing the same stroke with the racquet in the same position (No. 161 in "Great Lawn Tennis Players"), although one of the chief secrets of the severity of his forehand drive lies in the fact that in ordinary drives off the ground he keeps the racquet in line with the forearm.

With regard to the straight backhand drive down the line A-C in the diagram (p. 46) the position of the racquet is entirely different from its position in the cross-court drive, owing to the fact that in order that the stroke may be played straight down the line the rotation of the shoulders and trunk, which would *necessarily pull it out of its desired course*, must be entirely absent. I have carefully described this stroke in "Passing Strokes" in "Secrets of Lawn Tennis."

The position of the body and the racquet for the start of this stroke (when played with a horizontal racquet) is shown in Plate 10. The reader will note that the shoulders are not "corkscrewed" round as in the case of the cross-court drive in Plate 3, because the intended line of flight of the ball at right angles to the pathway in the Plate entirely prohibits the obtaining of impetus from semicircular body-swing.

Plate 11 shows the finish of the stroke begun in Plate 10. The power at the finish of the stroke, and the steering of it, which often has to be correct to a foot or less, depend chiefly on the thumb, which is pressed up the handle of the bat, as shown in Plate 12. The stroke can of course be played with the thumb as in Plate 21. People may talk as they please about loss of power in this position, but the fact remains that nicety of steering in this stroke cannot be obtained in any other, especially when the stroke is outside the

Plate 10. Backhand Drive straight down Court. The Ball travels at a Right Angle to the Pathway in the Plate.

Plate II. Finish of the Follow-through of a Backhand Drive straight down the Court.

Plate 12. The Writer's Grip for the Straight Backhand Drive. It is unsuitable for Backhand Volleys short across the Court (for which see Plate 23.)

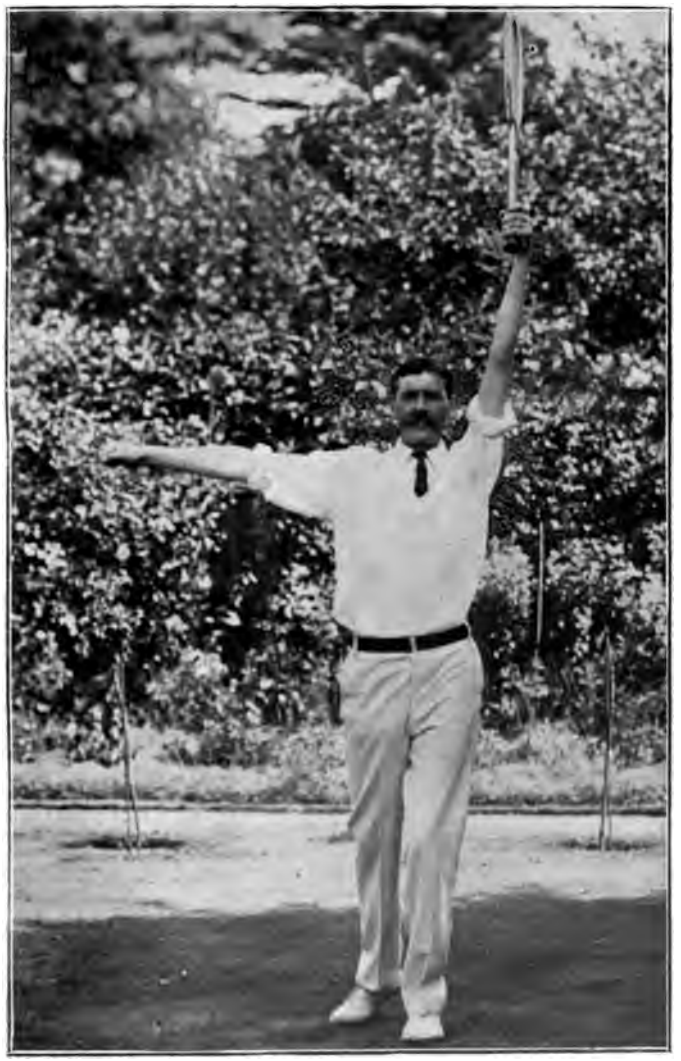
court, till the last moment when it pitches in the top corner of one's opponent's court.

To follow the ball right through till the racquet finishes at arm's length, as in Plate 11, is one of the most "paying" strokes in lawn tennis, but it is also one of the most difficult. It is "paying" because the pace it imparts to the ball, and the acute angle at which it causes the ball to bound, increase the difficulty of returning it, to an enormous extent. Nearly all the greatest players, from Pim and Ernest Renshaw downwards, have held the racquet horizontally for backhand driving, although E. W. Lewis, I believe, was an exception. The other position is with the head downwards. The reason why the horizontal position is preferred consists, I believe, first, in the fact that *the art of first-class tennis consists chiefly and primarily in accuracy of aim.* In matches between good players one constantly has to "pass" the other through a gap only a foot or two in width, or to place a ball within a few inches of a certain spot on the court. Accuracy such as this requires a control over the racquet such as cannot be obtained in the backhand strokes when the head of the racquet is held downwards. Moreover, in that position it is a physical impossibility to finish the backhand drive *across court* with body-swing, as shown in Plate 3. The body-swing alone causes the ball to "shoot" in that stroke after it has bounded. It is also impossible, without bringing the racquet more or less into a horizontal position, to play the "Eaves" backhand stroke to the "on" down the line D-E in the diagram, which is described a little later, so that the reader will see the absurdity of taking this backhand drive with the head of the bat downwards and labelling it "true backhand stroke," as if it were the

only standard one. *It can be made into a splendid stroke straight down the court* (as D. F. Davis showed), but it is useless (1) right across the court, (2) to the "on" (see Plate 13), (3) generally when aiming must be correct within a foot or so, (4) and it can only be played off a ball within very narrow limits of height.

Mr. Vaile's capers with the camera over this straight backhand drive have afforded me and may possibly afford the reader much amusement. First, in "Great Lawn Tennis Players" (Plate No. 131) he published a marvellous plate marked "Finish of Straight Backhand Drive, which is reproduced here as Plate 13. He stated that "follow-through was very much neglected in many of the English strokes"; that this was "an absolutely natural finish," and that it was "almost impossible to check the racquet before it was above the head, even were there any object in doing so." The only "object" in doing so is to get the ball over the net into court, and not to "loft" it a hundred feet high behind one's back, as in the photograph.

When he came to write the "Lawn Tennis Guide" for Messrs. Spalding, Mr. Vaile had grown wiser, and devised a plan for justifying these marvellous photographs. He first inserted a photograph showing the correct finish (as in Plate 16) of the backhand drive played with the head of the racquet downwards, and then he said "The follow-through brings one into *this constrained position*, so that a free and natural finish *is impossible* unless one turns the thumb round so that it goes up on top of the racquet as shown" (in Plate 17 here). I know of no passage in Mr. Vaile's works which shows so strikingly his ignorance of the follow-



Not Guaranteed.

Plate 13. The "Death or Glory" Finish of a Straight Backhand Drive.
After P. A. Vaile.

Plate 15. Impact of "Vertical" Backhand Stroke. Balls struck at higher elevation are played either with horizontal racquet or (with loss of power) with vertical racquet by crooking elbow.

Plate 16. "Vertical" Backhand Drive. Finish of the Follow-through.

Not Guaranteed.

Plate 17. Heroic Flourish after Finish of "Vertical" Backhand Drive.
After P. A. Vaile and Charles XII.

Plate 18. Position at Start of the "Scissors" Backhand Stroke to my Right—*i.e.,* to the "on." The racquet is drawn across and nearly under the ball from my Right to Left.

through at lawn tennis. The follow-through, whereby control over the ball is retained till the racquet assumes the position shown in Plate 16, is an operation requiring so much concentration of the faculties that the suggestion that at the end of it, because of a "constrained position" which does not exist, one should execute a totally useless act of legerdemain by twisting the wrist round and flourishing the bat (as shown in Plate 12) could only have come from Mr. Vaile. I have no doubt that Mr. Vaile desired to justify in some way the finish shown in Plate 9, and hit on this plan of doing it. I recommend to a practical golfer the suggestion that at the end of his follow-through he should execute a superfluous turn of the wrist, and put the face of the club backward.

There is no more "locking" of the shoulder or "constraint" in the position of Plate 16 than in that of Plate 17, as Mr. Vaile asserts, but, in fact, decidedly less.

The Vaile writings on the science of lawn tennis remind me of the words of the Swiss delegate in the *Alabama* case, who thought that international law was "evolved in every case by an inductive process," *i.e.*, "made up as you went on," which it certainly is *not*.

Plates 14, 15, and 16 show the start, impact, and finish of the backhand drive with the head of the bat held downwards. It is very like the "cleek" shot at golf, played backhanded, and the difference in the position at the finish results from the fact that at lawn tennis the drive is limited to 78ft. instead of about 300 yards as at golf. James Braid produces his well-known cleek shots without swinging the club much, if at all, above the position shown in Plate 14.

I now come to the backhand stroke to the "on," or

to the left side of a right-handed player, which is shown by the line D-E in the diagram on page 46. This stroke is best made by drawing the racquet (held on the backhand) along the ball from left to right (for a right-handed player) with a sharp and incisive cut. One should also turn slightly round towards the spot for which one aims, as described in "Passing Strokes" (see "Secrets of Lawn Tennis"). The beginning and ending of this rare but useful stroke are shown respectively in Plates 18 and 19. I need hardly say that it would be physically impossible to play the stroke as effectively as Eaves plays it unless the racquet were held horizontally. The spare arm is extended somewhat in Plate 18 because by moving out the spare arm in an opposite direction to that of the working arm in a "scissors" movement the player is assisted in playing the stroke by some law of muscular co-operation.

I now come to the low backhand volley right across the court. Both the strong and the weak points of my game were fairly well known at tournaments, but I have gathered from many opponents that my backhand volley short across the court from anywhere near the net was not usually reckoned among the latter. The placing of low backhand or forehand volleys up at the net at various angles into the other court is a subject which I am known to have had literally "at my fingers' ends," because I largely relied on them for winning aces. I do not recommend anyone to depend so little on driving for winning strokes or so much on cross-volleying as I did, but the fact remains that these strokes chiefly fixed my official handicap, which was at about "owe 15" from S. H. Smith. At Brighton in 1902 I won at those points from him.

Plate 20 shows my grip for all backhand volleys.

Plate 19. Finish of the "Scissors" Backhand Stroke *to the* "on." Note position of the Spare Arm.

Plate 20. The writer's Grip for Backhand Volleys across Court (and for all Backhand Volleys). Note the position of the Thumb.

As the result of twelve seasons' constant execution of this stroke I assert without the least hesitation that the great secret of steering these strokes successfully to any part of the court is the use of the thumb *sideways across the blade of the racquet*, as shown in Plate 20. I further say without hesitation that to attempt the backhand volley right across the court, and especially *short* across the court with the thumb straight up the handle, as shown in Plate 12, produces an unnatural, uncomfortable, and ineffective hold. I go further, and say that many of the most effective cross-court backhand volleys cannot be "brought off" with that hold at all, because *it is essential for the steering of them that the thumb should be across the handle of the racquet*, as shown in Plate 20. W. V. Eaves, whose ability at this stroke is well known, plays with the thumb in that position, because it is a sheer necessity to do so in the case of the finer backhand volleys. His grip appears in one of the Plates in "Great Lawn Tennis Players," although nothing is said about it. I play the backhand cross-volley with the thumb *away from the fingers*. Eaves plays it with the thumb away from all the fingers except the first, which he brings up level with the thumb.

With regard to this particular grip (shown in Plate 20) Mr. Vaile says: "It will be noticed that the thumb lies across and not straight up the handle, as in the case of *the natural hold*. The pressure consequently comes to a considerable extent sideways on the thumb, which is the position in which it is weakest." No doubt the pressure does come sideways, but this does not destroy the efficiency of the thumb in this stroke; whereas in the "natural hold," with the thumb

Plate 20. The writer's Grip for Backhand Volleys across Court (and for all Backhand Volleys). Note the position of the Thumb.

Not Guaranteed.

Plate 22. The famous "Natural Hold" for Backhand Strokes. The Steering Power of the Thumb is largely crippled in this grip. After P. A. Vaile.

Plate 23. The Start of a low Backhand Volley right across Court played near the Net.

Plate 24. Position at Finish of low Backhand Volley right across Court played near the Net.

serving and smashing, I was perhaps best known. This stroke is a low cut backhand volley close to the net, and right across the court. In fact, the ball often travels nearly parallel to the net over a great part of its length before it bounces and flies off nearly at a right angle to the side lines. These strokes are most effective, and most "taking" from the spectator's point of view, if they are played off a fast low drive from the base-line. J. Pim, who was the greatest master of the stroke who has yet been seen, had a wonderfully firm touch, like "the surgeon's hand," by which he often imparted an extraordinary cut to the ball, causing it to fly off at various impossible angles. He played it splendidly during his two championship successes at Wimbledon against W. Baddeley, and had, I think, the firmest touch I ever saw. I have no hesitation in saying that if Eaves or I had to play these strokes with the grip of Plate No. 22 they would be robbed of more than half their sting, owing to the crippling of the action of the thumb. The intended direction of the flight of the ball is shown by the dotted line on the Plate.

The reader will see that the position of the racquet forms a complete contradiction of the assertion made by Mr. Vaile in his "Guide," *without any qualification*, that "the prime essential of a good grip is that the forearm from elbow to wrist and the handle of the racquet shall be in one and the same straight line at the moment the ball is struck." This is true enough of driving and smashing strokes, but it is absolutely incorrect when applied to such strokes, for example, as the volleys on either hand which are played close to the ground, as in Plate No. 8 in this work. If the reader

will look at that Plate he will probably understand me when I say: first, that to attempt to bring the elbow in line with the racquet in that stroke would be absurd; and, secondly, that if the racquet were held with the head downwards it would be impossible to steer the ball (if desired) in the manner or with anything like the accuracy of the stroke shown in Plates 23 and 24. In the case of cut volleys generally near the net, which have to be played at all angles—as, for example, in the case of the stroke shown here—it is often flatly incorrect to say that the forearm and the wrist ought to be in the same straight line, as Mr. Vaile would know well enough if he had ever learnt to volley properly near the net. But any of my readers who happen to know anything about backhand volleying will be able to judge fairly well of Mr. Vaile's knowledge of that branch of the game from the attitude in the accompanying photograph (Plate 25), copied from the "Guide," which shows us his idea of the stroke. Let the reader imagine himself attempting to cross-volley, as in Plate 23, with the racquet in that position, and with his thumb placed as in Plate 12, and he will soon satisfy himself on the matter.

With regard to the angle to the arm at which the bat is *necessarily held* in this stroke, in case the reader desires "another opinion" on the subject I may say that can be had in plenty. The powers of the Dohertys in the backhand strokes are beyond dispute, and in Plates 168 and 169 of "Great Lawn Tennis Players" both R. F. and H. L. figure with the racquet *nearly at a right angle to the forearm* in playing this stroke. I need of course hardly say that this is not their attitude for drives from the shoulder, at which stroke they are both of them past-masters. The photographs of Cazalet and

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Plate 25. The Vaile attitude for a Backhand Cross-volley. Note the path of the racquet across the foot. *Rather* a rare Stroke among the "Cracks."

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Plate 26. "Finger Post" Finish of a Backhand Volley across Court. Note Grip and Position of face of racquet. Rather rare in actual play.

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Plate 27. Peculiar attitude for a low Backhand Volley. Note particularly here the fine balance. After H. S. Mahony.

Mahony (the latter of whom was most brilliant on the backhand) show precisely the same thing.

I now come to three photographs "in lighter vein."

Plate 26 shows the "finish of a backhand volley" after another well-known player. No doubt the volley has been finished, but there is nothing in the picture to show what it was like. The one thing certain about the picture is that it is *not* the finish of the stroke, for the position of the bat is impossible for the finish, since the face of it is turned *the wrong side*. One might just as well depict a player drinking a lemon-squash and call that the "finish of a backhand volley," as it very often is. The attitude in this Plate is copied from Plate 26 in "Modern Lawn Tennis."

Plate 27 is a copy of a singular photograph of the late Mr. H. S. Mahony (also from one of Mr. Vaile's books) in the act of playing a low backhand volley. He evidently over-reached himself with the effort, and saved himself from a bad fall by pressing his racquet on the grass. "Note particularly here the fine balance," says Mr. Vaile of this photograph.

I now come to a photograph which, with the accompanying letterpress, shows the theory of "lift" carried *ad absurdum*. It is a copy of Plate 174B in "Great Lawn Tennis Players," which is marked "Playing a low backhand volley at the net *with lift*," and is the one which I mentioned in a former work ("Lifting the Veil") as affording an excellent idea of "the plain, unvarnished Vaile." In this attitude, it appears that "you can *kill* the ball, *which from the usual position of English volleyers is a mechanical impossibility*." [I wish it had been, and that their position had been as alleged.] "I met the ball with a racquet travelling *fast* forwardly, upwardly, and obliquely—

really the lifting drive, but played as a backhand volley, which produces *a very deadly cross-court stroke.* The beauty of the lift here is that you can *absolutely drive upward* and yet make the ball go down all the more quickly."

The many things about this passage which, when taken with the photograph herewith, stamp it as one of the most remarkable in all Mr. Vaile's tennis books, will be obvious at a glance to a player with any knowledge at all of backhand volleying at the net; but I will try to indicate them for those who have not. In the first place, the position of the spare arm supporting the bat in quick volleying at the net (although right enough before returning service) is wrong in most cases, because it is in the way and there is no time and no necessity for it. Secondly, the idea of playing a *low backhand volley at the net* up into the air with "lift" is sheer lunacy on any hypothesis. For if one's opponent be anywhere within reach of one's return near the net, *the main requisite in the stroke is to keep it down, not to hit it up at all, because in that case, lift or no lift, it will usually be slaughtered at once by a good volleyer.* I should have asked nothing better myself. Thirdly, if the opponent be away from the net, the chief art in the stroke consists in beating him by the placing of the ball at as sharp an angle across court out of his reach and as low and swiftly as possible, unless one just drops the ball over the net with a "soft smash." To hit the ball *up* on these occasions, however swiftly it may drop afterwards, is simply madness, because it is working to get the ball again within one's opponent's reach. To "absolutely drive upwards" in this cross-court stroke is absolutely wrong. I have played about a hundred thousand of thes strokes with some success, and

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Plate 28. Absolutely Unique Backhand Volley at the Net with "Lift."
After P. A. Vaile.

have seen the cracks play about the same number, so I ought to know.

Since writing this chapter on the backhand strokes, I have read Mr. Vaile's article on "The Backhand Drive at Lawn Tennis" in the June number of *C. B. Fry's Magazine*, and as it is the most absurd article (as regards the English players) that I have ever read on British sport, I shall proceed to deal with it here.

The author begins by asserting that "There is not a single front-rank player in England to-day who *drives* (hits hard) a ball on his backhand." If any of the 4,000 people who watched F. L. Riseley and H. L. Doherty at Wimbledon this year (1906) happen to read this they will know what to think of it. Moreover, to select one player out of at least a dozen first-class backhand drivers whom I know, viz., E. R. Allen, I can hardly suppose that he has played in his 250 or more English tournaments without impressing the fact on a few people that he has a fine backhand drive. Mr. Vaile also asserts in the "Lawn Tennis Guide" that none of the crack Englishmen have a better backhand drive than a certain lady-player. If anyone were to seriously ask one of those ladies who are in the habit of playing against Riseley, E. R. Allen, the Dohertys, Hillyard, Eaves, Barrett, and many others whether this were correct, she would probably at once ask his friends if anything had happened lately to unhinge his mind. Mr. Vaile's statement loses nothing in absurdity from the fact that at present we possess one of the fastest backhand drivers ever seen anywhere—viz., R. F. Doherty.

Fig. 1 of the Vaile article illustrates his assertion that the "English backhand stroke" is played with the racquet nearly at a right angle to the forearm. I say

on this that as regards a high-bounding ball on the backhand, as shown in Plate 9, and as regards a low backhand volley, as shown in Plate 8, many of the best players do so, as Pim did before them, because the stroke may absolutely require it. The angle he produces is an absurdity for the *drive* of anything but a high-bounding ball. There is absolutely no cardinal rule in lawn tennis that the racquet and the forearm shall be in the same straight line. In some strokes they are so, but in others that position would be unnatural, ineffective, and often impossible.

In order to give weight to his statements Mr. Vaile's usual plan is to assert that "in the Colonies and America they play in that way," which is safe enough because there are but few people here to contradict him. The backhand drive with the head of the bat downwards is called the proper, the real, the true backhand, &c., in the article I am discussing, although I have previously explained that *its uses are physically most limited.* I ask any player who knows one end of the bat from the other to consider whether a backhand *drive, with cut from left to right*, as in Fig. 6 of the article, *with the head of the bat held downwards*, be not a physical absurdity. By the laws of mechanics and anatomy no *drive* can possibly be produced in that way. This picture is reproduced here in Plate 29, and it is one of the most comical in the Vaile gallery. It might be possible to produce an ineffective cut stroke in that way, but no drive if the racquet travels from A to B, as shown, because there is no force to produce it. I commend that picture to all who know the rudiments of the game. Mr. Vaile remarks: "*It is a dangerous stroke to try for a side-line pass.*" It is more than dangerous: it is a demented stroke for a side-line pass.

Not Guaranteed.

Plate 29. Impossible Backhand Drive with Cut from Right to Left.
After P. A. Vaile.

Fig. 7 is the same as Plate 16 in this book, *i.e.*, it shows the correct finish of the follow-through of the backhand drive, with the racquet held downwards, as R. F. Doherty played it for one of the Plates in "Great Lawn Tennis Players." Mr. Vaile followed it in Fig. 7 with the Charles XII. attitude shown in Plate 17 of this book, and in order to justify that attitude he makes the following remarks about Fig. 7 (Plate 16 here): "Backhand stroke showing *where the shoulder locks* if the stroke be improperly played," *i.e.*, if the racquet be not skied up in the air, as in Plate 17. Now, the follow-through is finished *right out to the end* before the position of Plate 16 is reached. Hence, *it would not matter a straw if the shoulder did lock, although, in fact, it does not,* nor is there any constrained position here whatever. The shoulder does not "lock" any more in that position than in that of Plate 17.

The following passage about Fig. 7 (Plate 16 here) has been set out absolutely verbatim, and is suggestive of nothing else than the game of "popp and fizz," which Mr. Vaile has described in the preface of "Great Lawn Tennis Players": "Here the thumb is underneath the racquet handle, and in this position the stroke cannot be carried through to a proper and effective finish." (N.B.—If one were, in fact, to attempt to carry the stroke through any further one would carry the ball far out of the opposite court high in the air over the stop-netting.) "This, however, is easily obtained by *turning the wrist some time before the arm gets into this constrained position, so that the face of the racquet which is now downwards will come uppermost,* and the thumb will then be above the handle, instead of as here shown. *This is sometimes effected almost at the moment of*

impact, especially when much cross-court work is being done [?]; but in a plain lift, or in a simple stroke without lift, it does not take place until later on, when *the free, strong finish shown in Fig. 8* [as in Plate 17 here], *which is absolutely true 'follow-through,' is obtained.*"

I ask my readers who know how to follow-through a stroke at golf what would happen to the follow-through if, *before it was finished, or "almost at the moment of impact," the face of the club were to be turned away from the ball and reversed.* No one with the least glimmer of an idea of the follow-through or the mechanics of the follow-through either at tennis or golf could possibly have written such rubbish as the above. Let the reader imagine for a moment what would happen if *almost at the moment of impact the face of the racquet were reversed away from the ball.* There would be an end of the follow-through, and the ball would go to Jericho immediately; and this is, forsooth, in "cross-court work," where *the follow-through is the most essential thing.*

The reason why Mr. Vaile makes the suggestion that in "cross-court work," *i.e.*, in backhand drives across the court, the face of the racquet should be reversed *almost at the moment of impact,* but after it, is plain enough. I have said above that any such action, either with a golf club or a tennis bat, would instantly end the follow-through, and turn the ball away altogether. Now in "Modern Lawn Tennis" (Plate 14 reproduced here in Plate 7) there is an absolutely impossible picture of the finish of the backhand drive across court, with follow-through. In order to account for this attitude Mr. Vaile now suggests that one could get into the position shown in that photo-

graph by reversing the racquet in the cross-court drive immediately after impact and flourishing it aloft. My readers will judge for themselves from this passage how much he understands of the theory of the game on which he has written so much.

I hope the reader will note the statement that the finish shown in Plate 17 here is "absolutely true follow-through." No doubt it is so—into the meadows beyond the courts; but tennis-players, unlike cricketers, have to keep the ball *in* the court, and not to try to drive the ball *out* of it. Mr. Vaile is clearly unaware of this difference, for he justifies the position shown in Plate 17 by referring to a "four along the carpet" at cricket, where *the further one hits the ball the better*, for there are no base-lines there. I do not know how much longer in Mr. Vaile's case the public will continue to mistake assurance for knowledge, but if they can swallow the above passage they must have a good literary digestion.

Mr. Vaile says that one of the lady-players "never gets beyond the position shown in Fig. 7 [Plate 16]: *this is fatal to a good backhand driver, and should never occur*." I have no doubt the reader will understand that if one actually followed the ball through beyond that position the action of the laws of mechanics would necessarily "loft" the ball out of court in most cases. In view of those mechanical laws which a player has unfortunately to observe in driving a ball *inside the opposite court* (unlike mere posing before a camera), the following statement is comical: "The finish of the backhand drive with the racquet held aloft *may amuse a few persons whose experience of the game is limited, but it is absolutely correct, and, indeed, with a properly played stroke, inevitable*." On this point

the reader, and especially the reader who understands lawn tennis, can consider the evidence afforded by the Plates in this chapter, and he can then please himself about believing me when I say that such finishes are a physical impossibility when the ball is followed right through, although by flourishing the bat after the follow-through such attitudes can be produced. In choosing between him and me on this important point as to the position of the bat at the end of the follow-through of the backhand strokes, the reader should ask Napoleon's question (when the son of an English peer was presented at his Court), "Qu'a-t-il fait"—*i.e.*, "What has he done"—at lawn tennis to qualify him to speak?

In the article mentioned above Mr. Vaile alleges four defects in the "English backhand stroke." First, he finds fault with the angle of the racquet to the ball, a subject already dealt with; secondly, he says that "the back of the arm is outwards towards the intended flight of the ball." If we look at the position of the back of the arm in Plate 5 we shall see how much this objection is worth. I also assert deliberately that one cannot get the full follow-through of the backhand drive across the court unless the back of the arm is more or less facing in that direction. Thirdly, he says that the ball is nearly always too much undercut. If there be one thing from which the backhand strokes of the best exponents of the game such as the Dohertys, E. R. Allen, Riseley, Hillyard, Barrett, &c., are particularly free, it is this tendency to undercut. I have often had reason to wish that they *did* so instead of getting a fast stroke with body-swing. Fourthly (and most absurd of all), he says that "*instead of being carried through after the ball*

the racquet is swept round the body with a kind of mowing action." I have already pointed out that, in the first place, the racquet is *not*, and *cannot be, swept round the body in the straight backhand drive or the stroke to the "on,"* and secondly, *that in the cross-court backhand drive it is impossible to carry the racquet through after the ball except by means of the "mowing action." The mowing action shows the full follow-through otherwise unobtainable.*

Whatever the defects of the English backhand stroke may be, they are certainly not as stated by Mr. Vaile. But it is good enough for the Editor of *Fry's Magazine*, and for other journalists who regard it as the chief sign of grace that a man should do his best to disparage the English.

Most of the English tennis cracks who have been accustomed for some years past to roam about the tournaments of all the various tennis-playing countries of Europe will know that I am only speaking the truth when I say that up to now (although, no doubt, it will be different in the future) their matches on level terms with foreign players, with about half a dozen exceptions, have usually occupied from fifteen to twenty minutes before they ended in favour of the Englishmen, and that the chief advantage possessed by the English cracks, next to volleying, lies in the superiority of their backhand strokes. Here and there one finds a foreigner like Décugis with a good backhand, but it is most exceptional. Hence we naturally find Mr. Vaile asserting with regard to the English backhand strokes that "None of these defects exists in the *strong, natural strokes that other countries play*"—a statement which can only be characterised by those who have played much abroad as unmitigated nonsense. Every im-

portant European and American championship has been won by English players, and in the majority of cases with considerable ease.

The article concludes with a statement that the position which is assumed in such strokes as that shown on Plate 11 implies "a resilient ball on a resilient joint," and that "resilience on resilience is *no good*." I, on the other hand, say that although there is inevitably some loss of power in that position, many invaluable straight backhand passing strokes are *impossible without a racquet held in that position*. By keeping the wrist rigid and by practice one can get quite as much power as is necessary for these passing drives down the line, which simply do not require a "slog" like a hard forehand drive, but great accuracy in "passing."

This concludes my remarks on the luminous article in *Fry's Magazine*. I confess to a feeling of some shame that an article so full of mis-statements of every kind, both about the game and about the English players, and with nothing to recommend it except assurance, should have been suffered to go without literary comment from any member of the lawn-tennis world. Mr. Vaile no doubt calculated almost correctly that they would receive his remarks in silence and (vulgarly speaking) "lying down." When I reflect on the intellectual qualities of the article as displayed in the passages I have quoted, and on the injurious and grotesque slanders of the skill of the leading exponents of the game in the world, viz., the English (slanders which have nothing but the assurance of their author to back them), I am driven to the conclusion that this silence is mainly owing to the fact that, like many other things in England, lawn tennis and its literature is partly a gin-soaked and beer-soaked pursuit.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FOREHAND GRIPS OF THE RACQUET.

IN the last chapter I discussed, incidentally, the subject of the backhand grips of the racquet, and I now come to that of the forehand grips.

I shall assist the reader by explaining at the outset that, according to my experience, *both the forehand grip and the angle* (if any) *made by the racquet with the forearm depend chiefly on the part played by the wrist in any particular stroke.* If the wrist is kept mainly rigid, as in the plain forehand drive, and merely transmits the force from the shoulder, the racquet should be in a line with the forearm at impact, and the thumb should be only partly across the handle. If, on the other hand, *separate action by the wrist is a necessity in the stroke,* then the thumb naturally goes across the handle to increase the power and to steer, and the racquet makes an obtuse angle of some sort with the forearm. As examples of these two kinds of strokes I may mention Plate 33a, which shows the position in a horizontal drive, for the first case; and for the second case in which the wrist plays a part, Plate 23, which shows a backhand volley across court, Plate 9, which shows a high backhand drive across court, Plate 39, which shows a forehand cut volley across court, and, lastly, Plate 45, which shows a forehand smash. In all these strokes *the wrist takes independent action, and the*

thumb plays an active part also. In the case of the smash this happens at the beginning of the stroke, for half-way through it the weight of the body and not the wrist does most of the work by means of the shoulder. Mr. Vaile is right enough in contending that an average man cannot make a good forehand drive with the thumb across the handle of the bat in the position of Plate 31 (although S. H. Smith does it, with a peculiar handle), but he is quite wrong in contending that this is " the English grip." It is also quite likely, as I have said elsewhere, that the American service requires a grip of its own, and these two facts, with one mentioned later, represent the whole substratum of truth in Mr. Vaile's " grip " accusations. But by suggesting, as he does, that the forehand grip for shoulder strokes (drives) is the same as the forehand grip for wrist strokes (or half-wrist strokes), such as smashes, plain overhead services, and low forehand cuts, as in Plates 45, 47, and 39, he does nothing but confuse the whole subject.

As a very considerable part of Mr. Vaile's literary labours of the last two years have been taken up with denunciations of what it pleases him (but very few others who are aware of the facts) to call " the English grip," it may interest the reader to learn by means of photographs the exact point about which he has raised all the hubbub. I may say at once that I think it quite possible that one or both of the American overhead twist services are produced by some players with a slightly different grip from that which is used for any of the other strokes of the game, whether on the forehand or the backhand. My belief in the matter arises tly from a photograph of Eaves in the act of playing American service, at which he is known to possess

some skill, and partly from one of de Borman. No doubt the service grips of all the best producers of the American services such as Ward, Larned, Whitman, Wilding, &c., will shortly be illustrated in some book on the game. Anyhow, I think it quite likely that the grip is a special one. Mr. Vaile, however, with all his diagrams and discussions of the mechanics of these strokes, has produced no photographs and made no statements whatsoever on this important subject in any of his books, doubtless because, as I have shown elsewhere in this book by the most unmistakable photographic evidence, *he knows but little about the practical production of these strokes.*

In one of Mr. Vaile's own Plates (68) in the "Guide," reproduced here (Plate 44), his thumb may be clearly seen across the handle of the bat in flat opposition to his "natural forehand grip." What he calls his "natural hold" is correct enough for forehand drives and low driving volleys on the forehand, but it is simply wrong for forehand services, smashes, and cuts, which are "worked" by the wrist and steered by the thumb, because the thumb is crippled in those strokes with that hold. The best proof that his "English grip" theory is wrong lies in the fact that there are so many good forehand drivers in the country who could not possibly play as they do with the grip of Plate 31 for forehand strokes except with a small-handled bat.

In my opinion the natural history of the Vaile grip business is somewhat as follows: Both of the Messrs. Doherty do an immense amount of backhand volleying at the net in Doubles. H. S. Mahony also did a great deal of it in Single play. These particular players were the main examples on whom Mr. Vaile relied during the incubation process of his theories on English

lawn tennis. Now, when a player is making underhand forehand volleys from some place close to the net, as he constantly has to do in good Doubles, it is quite true that he would be able to hit harder *on the forehand* with the grip shown in Plate 32 than with the grip shown in Plate 31, *but then this grip cripples him almost entirely for backhand cross-volleys, unless he has time to change his hold, which in quick rests of volleying at the net he hardly ever has.* One constantly has to volley with the speed of lightning, first on the forehand and then on the backhand, *when a change of grip is out of the question.*

I distinctly remember to have seen R. F. Doherty constantly using one grip at the net for both kinds of low volleys, viz., that shown on Plate 21, whereby he could play both forehand and backhand volleys at the net with an unchanged hold with some sacrifice of pace on the forehand. I believe that Mr. Vaile got hold of this fact (which is the result of necessity) from watching the Dohertys, and, with his usual discrimination, promptly made it the basis for his accusations concerning the English grip.

Mr. Vaile's writings about the lawn-tennis grips form a striking instance of the fact that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

His constant abuse of what he calls "the English grip" is not based mainly on its unfitness for producing the American service. Very possibly, as I have said, that service needs a special grip. In one of his earlier books (viz., in Plate 2 of "Great Lawn Tennis Players") he produced a photograph *quite different from his last photograph in the "Guide,"* showing what he called "The English Grip" for forehand strokes. The grip shown in Plate 30 of the

Plate 30. The author's Grip for the Forehand Drive. The Thumb should be further back, as in Plate 32, for Forehand Drives to the "off," or straight down the Court.

Not Guaranteed.

Plate 31. Alleged "English Grip" for Forehand Driving. After P. A. Vaile.

present work is my own grip for the forehand return of the service, but in playing forehand-cut volleys at the net (see Plate 39) I put my thumb much further across the handle, because *the thumb is the rudder of the hand, and I should lose most of the power and accuracy which these strokes require if I did not do so.* I could not, however, make a proper forehand drive with my thumb in the position shown in Plate 31, which I use for serving, smashing, and forehand-cut volleys at the net, but not for forehand driving.

The grip shown in Plate 30 is almost the same as "the English grip" in "Great Lawn Tennis Players." In the "Guide," however, Mr. Vaile found it necessary, in order to substantiate his attacks on "the English grip," to produce a grip which should be manifestly absurd for forehand driving, so he deserted his former photograph, which was not exaggerated enough, and produced a grip about the same as that of Plate 31 here. By placing the thumb about three-quarters of an inch further across the handle of the bat than in his former picture he produced a grip which would deprive a forehand drive of the greater part of its power with an ordinary-sized handle.

Mr. Vaile admits that his statements about "the English grip" are mainly founded on the grip used by the Messrs. Doherty, but I should be much surprised if either of those two players produces as excellent a forehand drive as they do with the thumb placed as in Plate 29. The fact is that the Dohertys owe much to the great use they make of the thumb in all backhand strokes, and especially in volleying. As it is almost impossible to play a good forehand drive with the grip of Plate 31, *except with a small handle*, and as this is the stroke in which English players chiefly excel,

I leave the reader to judge whether it is correct to call that hold "the English grip." When I am playing a forehand "smash" (a stroke to which I owe a good deal), my thumb is right across the handle of the bat, but when I am making a forehand drive off the service my thumb has, or ought to have, receded across the handle by rather over half an inch. Mr. Vaile says himself that none of the best English forehand drivers use the grip of Plate 31, but as Mr. H. L. Doherty is certainly one of these I do not think that he drives with it either.

As a matter of fact, the best English driver, Smith, uses it, as shown clearly in one of the photographs of "Great Lawn Tennis Players," but he uses a peculiar handle. Mr. Vaile's favourite example, de Borman, uses it also. I do not think that I have ever come across a more persistent hoax than Mr. Vaile's oft-repeated assertions about the imaginary English grip. With regard to three classes of strokes with which I am generally supposed to be fairly well acquainted, viz., (1) cut forehand volleys at the net with the head of the bat uppermost, (2) the plain overhead service, (3) the smashing of overhead balls, I assert definitely that I owed most of my efficiency at those strokes to the fact that when I played them my thumb was nearly as far across the handle of the bat as in Plate 31. I am perfectly clear about that point. But I am equally certain that, in my case, in order to produce a good forehand drive across court it was necessary to move the thumb back at least half an inch.

If one includes the subject of the American service grip with the foregoing remarks, I believe that one has most of the facts about the "English grip" question in a nutshell.

Not Guaranteed.

Plate 32. Mr. Vaile's Forehand Grip. It is wrong for Forehand Cutting, Serving, or Smashing, but is good for Driving.

Plate 32 shows Mr. Vaile's own patent "natural hold" for forehand strokes, which is to cure us of our deplorable incapacity (*as alleged by him*) to play lawn tennis in England. I have imitated Plate 1 of his "Guide" as closely as I could. Having regard to the position of the thumb in this grip, I say definitely (1) that this hold would completely cripple me for playing the forehand-cut volley stroke across court as shown in Plate 39, because my thumb would be almost useless; (2) that for the same reason it would greatly interfere with the serving or smashing of overhead balls to the "on," *i.e.*, to the left of a right-handed player.

I may say clearly here that in my opinion it is essential when using an ordinary 5½in. handle to place the thumb somewhere near the place shown in Plate 32 if one desires full benefit of the thumb in forehand drives straight down court and also out to the "off."

Mr. Vaile often asserts that the lady-players use his hold, and no doubt some of them drive well with it (I think it is correct for driving, except for the absurd position of the first finger); but then it must be remembered that their game mostly consists rather of driving than of smashing and cutting. In fact, Mrs. Sterry is the only lady-player who can play cut-volleys at the net really well.

After writing this chapter I went to the British Museum and looked at the photographs in "Great Lawn Tennis Players" to see if anything could be gleaned from them about grips. The results confirmed the above theories in a very striking manner.

In the first place I may say that, although Mr. Vaile has given not the slightest hint that he knows

of any difference between the forehand grips for different classes of stroke, but has, on the other hand, presented one forehand grip for all strokes, with which many of the best forehand shots (which depend chiefly on the thumb) cannot be played, and although he has distinctly implied on page 260 of "Great Lawn Tennis Players" that H. L. Doherty is wrong in smashing with his thumb across the handle of the bat, nevertheless he has himself been photographed in Plate 68 of the "Guide" (reproduced here as Plate 44) *with his own thumb right across the handle*. Plates 21 and 26 of "Great Lawn Tennis Players" show R. F. and H. L. Doherty each serving with the thumb right across the bat. Other photographs show H. L. Doherty and W. Baddeley each smashing with that hold. But F. L. Riseley and G. W. Hillyard afford the strongest proof of my assertions. They are both of them known to be particularly good forehand drivers off the ground, and particularly good at overhead balls, whether in serving or smashing. Plate 77 shows that Hillyard drives with the thumb as in Plate 30 here, but Plate 144 shows that he smashes with the thumb as in Plate 31 here. F. L. Riseley's hold for driving is also nearly the same as that of Hillyard, but Plate 31 shows him serving with the thumb as in Plate 31 here. W. Baddeley, also, in Plate 64, has his thumb right across for serving. A. W. Gore, in Plate 78, shows that for forehand driving his hold is nearly that of Plate 30 re, which is, in my opinion, *very strong evidence in ed that in general that hold is the correct one for ives off the ground.* I think it highly t his grip for serving is the same as that d, but, anyhow, his service is not strong.

Plate 33. De Borman's Grip for his American Service.

S. H. Smith, whom I have never seen making a cross-volley at the net in my life, uses a comparatively small, peculiarly shaped handle for his famous drive; but it is noteworthy that Plate 74 shows that he drives with his thumb *right across the handle of the bat,* which is rather up against Mr. Vaile's oft-repeated assertion that this hold *will inevitably reduce the game to patball!*

It is true that these and the following facts about the grips of the cracks have been gleaned by a close scrutiny of the photographs in "Great Lawn Tennis Players," but I need hardly say that there was not one word in the letterpress about it to assist one in the task.

I now proceed to show (Plate 33) the grip for the reverse American service which de Borman uses. It will be noticed that both the thumb and the fingers are placed on the *edge* of the handle of the bat. De Borman can produce this service moderately well, so his grip is not without interest. Eaves' grip for the forward American service is very like that of Plate 21, *i.e.*, the thumb is not so far round the handle of the bat as in de Borman's case. De Borman drives with his thumb *right across the handle* (on a large handle), which shows that it is nonsense to say that this hold necessarily produces patball. My own objection to driving with the grip of Plate 31 is that I could never steer the ball properly with it or get the full power either in forehand drives *straight down the court or out to the off.* In Plate 68 of the "Guide" (see Plate 44 here) Mr. Vaile may be seen waiting for a forehand smash with the very "English grip" which he denounces for all forehand strokes. The use of the thumb across the bat for fore-

hand smashing is confirmed up to the hilt (if any confirmation for such a common-sense fact be needed) by Plates 149 and 153 of R. F. and H. L. Doherty and Plate 139 of F. L. Riseley in "Great Lawn Tennis Players," beside others of Cazalet, Wilding, H. Baddeley (158a), &c.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME FOREHAND STROKES.

I PROPOSE to begin this chapter with a few remarks about a stroke which has been often described, and even photographed, but which, nevertheless, is of such cardinal importance in playing lawn tennis that some account of it ought to be given here. I refer to the forehand return of the service made with the racquet in a horizontal position off a ball at the very top of an average bound.

The chief reason why I mention this particular stroke here in a book in which I have endeavoured as far as I can to discuss nothing but those salient and essential points about the game which, although familiar enough to some players, have not hitherto been clearly stated, consists in the fact that *in this stroke when properly played lies nearly half the secret of success in first-class Doubles.* I have had about as much experience both of playing and watching good Doubles as most people, and that is my firm belief in the matter. I am dealing now with Doubles in which both one's opponents are sound volleyers, and also players who do actually get right up to the net after serving. I say deliberately that when this is the case *one of the main secrets of beating them lies in the horizontal forehand "slogging" return of the service at the top of the bound across court, when the placing of the service admits of it.*

No "lifting" drive of the return which passes 2ft.

above the net (as Mr. Vaile suggests) could possibly compare with the above stroke for efficacy in a first-class Double: firstly, because a good volleyer who is fast in following his service to the net would simply revel in a return at that height above it (I should myself); and, secondly, because the effort in making that particular stroke (as de Borman makes it, for example) undoubtedly delays a man for several invaluable seconds in starting to run after returning the service. Moreover, it is absolutely incorrect to assert, as Mr. Paret (echoed, as usual, by Mr. Vaile) has asserted, that it is possible to hit a ball harder and yet keep it in court with "lift" than with a plain-face racquet. Given a certain altitude of bound this is the same as asserting that a glancing blow can be made harder than a knock-down blow. Let anyone who has watched Gore and E. R. Allen, and, above all, Smith, consider whether their strokes could possibly be hit harder by converting them into *glancing blows*, in which *half the force misses the ball altogether*. The thing is too contrary to the plain facts of dynamics for discussion. Illustrations of the "lifting" drive may be seen on Plates 41-3.

When Mr. Vaile calls the "lifting" drive "the king of ground strokes" at lawn tennis, he only shows his ignorance of the part necessarily played in Doubles among first-class players by sheer hard hitting in which all lift would be proportionally a drawback. This constantly occurs in first-class Doubles when it is necessary to keep the return low over the net within an inch or two of it, in order to defeat the low volleyer, or when one has to aim straight at a gap only a foot or so in width. I am far from asserting here that a lifting drive in a Double might not be useful, but what I do assert is that when one's oppo-

Plate 33a. Position halfway through Horizontal Forehand Return of the Service low over the Net across Court. The ball is struck at the very top of the bound.

nents are good at net volleys the place of plain slogging with a flat bat can be taken by no glancing or "lifting" blow which produces a spinning ball and a curved flight.

Does anyone imagine that Mr. Vaile can argue away Pim and Stoker or the Dohertys, or the Allens at their best, or the Baddeleys or the Renshaws?

After these explanatory remarks, I now proceed to describe the return of the service into the court of the server, who will inevitably (if he be fast) be close up to the net when the return passes over it, and who is consequently a real and awkward factor to deal with. When one does not lob over his head—which should certainly not be attempted as often as the Americans attempt it—or try to pass his partner, the great thing in circumventing him is to make the return both fast and low, because then, even if he reaches the ball, he will have to play an underhand volley, which at once destroys the server's advantage and gives the other side a level chance for the point.

Plate 33a shows the horizontal racquet shortly before it strikes the ball. *The most essential and difficult feature about this stroke is to hit the ball absolutely at the top of the bound.* In company with most players, I have passed a whole season in hitting the ball a fraction of a second too late, and have only found it out at the last tournament, because there is nothing in lawn tennis which so constantly requires mental alertness as this. In fact, in order to continue to do it correctly a man must infallibly be wide-awake and keen on winning. Very few, even of the cracks, keep themselves "at concert pitch" in this matter, but among those who do are H. L. Doherty, Smith, Eaves, E. R. Allen, Hillyard, and Greville (if he still plays). It is "just a mental

operation" which requires constant alertness and which has a great deal to do with success.

In the return of the service in a Double, with the server charging up to the net, time is more of the essence of the contract in playing the return than in most other cases. Hence the first requisite is to strike the ball at the very top of its flight. Next it is most necessary to try to hit the return boldly from the shoulder *all through the match.* Very often the physical condition of the nerves, especially if one has been in a smoky atmosphere till midnight, will render this very difficult, but the great thing to remember is that one may just as well risk something in slogging and "have a dash for victory" as go down (as almost certainly happens against good players) through tamely patting back the service. Moreover, the longer one perseveres in hard hitting the easier and safer it becomes. The next Plate (34) shows the position at the end of the forehand return across the court when the stroke has been carried right out to the finish and greatly assisted thereby. In many cases a stroke of that sort has enabled me to volley the return between the two opponents, or has given my partner the chance for a kill.

One of the main secrets in playing the ground strokes both forehanded and backhanded consists in *giving oneself as much room as possible* by keeping one's full distance from the ball when playing it. This is specially noticeable in all the ground strokes of R. F. Doherty and in the splendid backhand drives of E. R. Allen, and accounts for much of their excellence in that branch of the game. It is also important to stand firmly if possible.

I cannot imagine anything more incorrect than

Plate 34. Finish of Horizontal Forehand Drive of the Service across Court.

Plate 35. Correct Finish of the Follow-through of Vertical Forehand Drive. It should be compared with the Frontispiece. After R. F. Doherty.

Mr. Vaile's statement in the "Guide" that "*nearly all forehand shots are more accurately described as a sweeping movement than as hits.*" There is all the difference in the world (especially from the opponent's standpoint) between a mere sweeping movement and a really good hit or "punch." The drives of Smith, Gore, Allen, Riseley, Wilding, Ridding, and some others are not sweeps, but real hits. No one who has played much with these people would deny the difference between a sweep and a genuine hit, and I conceive that Mr. Vaile's statement is merely the result of his general plan to discourage sound hitting and to try to turn the game into a sleepy, voluptuous affair, consisting chiefly of "chops" and "spins" and Mixed Doubles, as he has indicated clearly enough in the first edition of "Modern Lawn Tennis."

After this long dissertation the reader will, no doubt, be glad of a little amusement such as the Plates which follow have certainly afforded the writer.

The photograph which forms the frontispiece of this book shows Mr. Vaile's idea of the finish of a straight forehand drive, and it is a copy of Plate 94 in "Great Lawn Tennis Players," where Mr. Vaile says, in referring to it, that *follow-through is much neglected in England.* If tournament players did not carefully "neglect" this sort of follow-through they would soon incur the wrath of secretaries and referees for wantonly skying out of the ground new balls worth a shilling each.

The next Plate (35) is a copy of a photograph of R. F. Doherty finishing the follow-through of the same stroke in the correct position, without any flourish. The forehand drive is a stroke which usually occurs several times per minute in tennis matches.

Three photographs of low forehand volleys follow next, which are extremely comical to players of experience. The first one (36) is a copy of an extraordinary attitude into which the late H. S. Mahony managed to coil himself in Plate 23 of "Modern Lawn Tennis," which purported to show a low forehand volley. It is no doubt true that a few players do occasionally get into these weird positions in the heat of battle, but if any of my readers want to know if this be an advisable position for a low forehand volley, I recommend him to try to spend ten seconds in the attitude indicated and to see how he likes it. As Mr. Vaile drew so much of his inspiration about the "English" methods from H. S. Mahony, I am much surprised that he did not mark the photograph as "The English Volleying Position."

Plate 37 is a copy of Plate 70 in the "Guide," which is marked "Low Forehand Volley." I doubt if it would commend itself much to the Allens. Next to the position, which, of course, wholly prevents the putting of that power or "punch" into the stroke which Mr. Vaile is so fond of asserting to be absent in English low volleys, the most inaccurate thing in the photograph is the short length of the follow-through as shown by the dotted line A-B. I rather fancy that Mr. Vaile was anxious to "cover" a ridiculous photograph (No. 166) in "Great Lawn Tennis Players," reproduced in the next Plate here (No. 38), where a player was shown with the racquet on the ground for the finish of this stroke. With regard to that photograph, Mr. Vaile requested us to "note the slightly downward motion of the racquet" *at the finish* of a low forehand volley, a statement which I pointed out elsewhere (in "Lifting the Veil") to be tantamount

Not Guaranteed.
Plate 36. Singular attitude for a low Forehand Volley.
After H. S. Mahony.

Not Guaranteed.

Plate 38. Unique position for Finish of Low Forehand Volley. After P. A. Vaile.

Plate 39. Start of a Low Forehand Cut Volley right across the Court, with head of racquet held uppermost for steering ses. The arrowhead shows flight of ball after impact.

Plate 40. Finish of Low Forehand Cut Volley across Court. It is played with head of racquet uppermost.

to saying that one finishes picking up an egg "with a slightly downward motion of the tablespoon."

The last two Plates of this chapter illustrate the start and finish of a certain stroke of mine which will be familiar enough to many, on which I largely relied, and which has often stood me in more than good stead in winning a match, although a couple of years ago only a very select number of players made use of it. A glance at Plate 39 will go far to explain it. This stroke consists of a low forehand-cut volley (played from a position close to the net) down the length of the net across the court, nearly in the direction of the post, and pitching usually not more than 4ft. away from the net in the other court. It is most effectively made off a hard low drive from the back of the court, and, of course, in that case wins the point on the spot, because the direction of its course makes it impossible for one's opponent to reach it. I have won many and many a match with it. One plays it *almost wholly from the wrist, with the help of the thumb,* and with the head of the bat uppermost, as in the photograph. It is a physical impossibility to play it properly right down the net with the "Vaile" forehand grip, because the position of the thumb in that grip cripples the whole stroke. When the drive or other stroke is coming over, one bends down, as shown in the photograph, until one's eye is on a level with the approaching ball, which is then struck with a sharp, incisive cut by the racquet, pointed towards the intended direction of the ball across the court down the net. The wrist makes the stroke, and when the drive is a fast one the resulting cross-volley is one of the most spectacular strokes in lawn tennis, partly owing to the extraordinary bounce of the spinning ball on touching

the bound. I have never myself taken the trouble to study the mechanics of these spinning balls, but from the observations at the time of many opponents who have attempted to return them I gathered that they had had practical opportunities for doing so.

Plate 40 shows the finish of the stroke. I strongly recommend the readers of this book to cultivate this stroke, if they have not already done so. J. Pim was the finest exponent of it whom I ever saw, and there is no stroke to which I am more indebted for success in matches, although so few players at present know how to make it. The stroke is a typical example of finesse as contrasted with force, and against a player of the type of S. H. Smith it is simply invaluable. The effect which it almost invariably produces on Continental "galleries" in various countries is a testimony to its quality. *The future development of lawn tennis in England will probably consist largely in the development of the cross-volley, in its almost infinite variety, both forehanded and backhanded.* Among the general run of players the short cross-volleying net game (involving great delicacy yet firmness of touch) is still in its infancy.

A few remarks (with some illustrations) on the "glancing" or "lifting" forehand drive, which has attracted much attention lately, will conclude this chapter. The three Plates Nos. 41-3 will give the reader a fair idea of the general type of the stroke. H. A. Parker, who was over here in 1905, and who was a shade better than E. R. Allen, had a most curious but effective "freak" drive with lift, but the Plates here are derived from the writer's recollection of the play of the Belgian player de Borman. I recommend those who are interested in the subject to turn the handle of

Plate 41. Start of the Forehand "Glancing" or "Lifting" Drive. See the next Plate.
After P. de Borman.

Plate 42. Impact of the Forehand "Glancing" or "Lifting" Drive. The lines R^1 R^2 show the entire course of the racquet and the line B shows the flight of the ball.

After P. de Borman.

Plate 43. Position of Racquet at Finish of Forehand "Glancing" or "Lifting" Drive. After P. de Borman.

a cinematograph camera on this player when he is next over here and then to study the result. If they do they will learn nearly as much about the stroke as one can without actually attempting to produce it. The undoubted value of this stroke, when played as correctly as de Borman plays it, lies in the fact that even in volleying a return of his (underhand) with the tremendous spin he imparts to it there is considerable difficulty. Plate 41 shows the start of the stroke, in which plenty of room for swinging is allowed. Plate 42 indicates the whole course and the glancing action of the stroke on the ball by which the upward spin or lift is imparted to it. The lines R^1 R^2 show the whole movement of the racquet, and the line B shows the flight of the ball. It will be seen that a great deal of the force of the blow is spent in the air. Plate 43 shows the remarkable but correct position of the bat at the finish of the de Borman stroke.

When I was playing de Borman he did not attempt to run up to volley at all, but played a "Smith" game from the back of the court. No doubt the production of the spin which he imparts to the ball takes a great deal out of a player, and it also throws him backwards somewhat, so that there is some physical difficulty in combining this stroke in great perfection with much volleying.

CHAPTER IX.

THE POSITION OF THE SPARE ARM.

THIS subject would not require more than a casual mention in the present volume but for the fact that there are many comical and even impossible photographs connected with it in the Vaile books, which renders it necessary to clear the matter up. In making the statements which follow about it, I am not relying on my own views alone, but on the evidence afforded by many published action-photographs, which include six of R. F. Doherty, five of H. L. Doherty, and also photographs of Riseley, Eaves, Cazalet, Mahony, and Ball-Greene.

No practical tennis-player will be surprised to hear that all these photographs go to prove clearly that the crack players drop the spare arm as quickly as possible after serving, and *let it hang loose or keep it tucked in out of the way across the body*, with the hand, in most cases, unclenched, unless it is holding a ball. Further, when they are about to smash, the photographs show conclusively that the other arm is not raised at all, but hangs down loosely. And the same remark applies to their forehand driving also.

The reason for all this is obvious and simple enough. In the first place, the spare arm on these occasions is not required to be outstretched for balancing purposes (when it would only be in the way), either by the laws of mechanics or anatomy or lawn tennis. Secondly, a player has quite enough to do to

Not Guaranteed.

Plate 44. "Waiting for a Smash"—of the spare arm as well as the ball.
After P. A. Vaile.

control and direct the limbs and muscles actually used in the stroke without executing absolutely superfluous and distracting movements with the unemployed arm at the same time. Thirdly, there is more than enough strain on the muscles and limbs actually used without at the same time needlessly straining and contorting those which are not used.

Mr. Vaile, who has been, I gather, something of a weight-lifter in his time, has evolved the idea that at lawn tennis, as at weight-lifting, the unemployed arm ought to be stretched out for balancing purposes, unmindful of the fact that instead of a 56lb. weight a player is only wielding a racquet of 14½oz. As he has no practical knowledge of good tournament tennis he has been led by this idea into the most remarkable photographic errors, some of which are reproduced here. In some cases his antics with the unemployed arm actually put it in direct jeopardy of grievous bodily harm, which is rather comical in a book of *instruction* on lawn tennis. Besides the stretching out of the unused arm he has another whim for tightly clenching the unused hand, much after the style of the heroine in melodrama when she crumples up the hated letter preparatory to stamping on it. I need hardly inform any practical player that this dramatic clenching affords no assistance to the stroke, and is strongly contradicted by the photographs of the cracks mentioned above. No doubt it is useful in a hundred yards sprint, but the sprinter does not carry a racquet in one hand or make strokes with it while he is running.

Plate 44 is a copy of Plate 68 in the "Lawn Tennis Guide." The original purports to show P. A. Vaile "waiting for a smash." This is a most comical picture to a practical player, owing to the fact that if

it were necessary to place the smash towards the left (my right), as constantly happens in matches, the player would inevitably smash not only the ball but his spare arm as well, the position of which in the photograph is baulking, unnecessary, and distracting. This sort of blunder is bound to arise sooner or later when a man writes three books of instructions about a game he does not understand. It is certain that no tennis reputation can stand many photographs such as the one on the outside cover of the "Guide." *Nearly every picture of the American services and of overhead strokes in the "Guide" contains similar blunders.*

Plate 45 shows the present writer in position for a favourite stroke (the smash), which has also been assumed in their photographs by various practical exponents of the gentle art of "killing" overhead balls, such as F. L. Riseley, H. L. Doherty, &c. That a player occasionally, in the excitement of play, stretches his spare arm out in smashing a ball away from the left is quite possible, but that this is a correct or necessary position no "crack" in his senses would assert for a moment. The arm in that position for overhead strokes does not *balance*, but only *baulks*. The statement at page 49 that *in an overhead stroke "the spare arm should never be loose; whatever the right arm is doing, the left should be counter-balancing,"* is some of the greatest nonsense ever written on tennis, when applied to the overhead strokes or to forehand driving as Mr. Vaile applies it.

Plate 46 here is a copy of Plate 31 of the "Guide," which purports to show the reverse American service being played *from my left to right*. There is no doubt that by sticking out his arm in that manner a player would not only baulk and distract himself but

Plate 45. Waiting for a Smash.
After most of the English "Cracks."

Not Guaranteed.

Plate 46. Remarkable Position of Spare Arm for Reverse American Service. The racquet travels from my left to right. After P. A. Vaile.

Plate 47. Position of Spare Arm when the ball leaves the hand in serving.

Not Guaranteed.

Plate 48. Remarkable Attitude for the American Service. After P. A. Vaile (but very few Americans).

Not Guaranteed.

Plate 49. Absurd Position of Spare Arm at Finish of American Service. After P. A. Vaile.

Plate 50. Unique "Weight-lifting" Position of the Spare Arm in the Forehand Drive.
After P. A. Vaile.

would run the risk of a nasty blow on the spare forearm as well. Before hastily concluding that Mr. Vaile is at least a practical guide to the American services I recommend a glance at the Plates on that subject here.

The next Plate (47), which shows the position of the spare arm and hand when the ball leaves it, has been inserted because it shows in a very striking way the entire folly of the next Plate (48), which is a copy of Plate 26 in the "Guide." The position of the racquet behind the head shows that the ball has only that moment been thrown up, so that the position of the spare arm and hand *could only be assumed at all by a violent act of legerdemain* which would be *most* distracting to a player whose whole attention needs to be centred on the ball, and on the arm which strikes it. That photograph will enlighten a discerning player about as clearly as anything in the book.

The next photograph (Plate 49) shows the "Vaile" position at the finish of the American service, and I ask my readers to consider whether that baulking attitude of the spare arm be a necessary feature of a difficult and complicated stroke with the other arm.

It is just the same story when we come to the pictures of the "lifting" drive about which Mr. Vaile has talked and written so much. It is well known that to stretch the arm out and keep it stretched out even for a few seconds involves a very appreciable effort; yet Mr. Vaile seriously suggests over and over again by means of his photographs that in playing this drive one should stretch the spare arm out in the useless, tiring, and baulking attitude shown in the next Plate (50). As the forehand drives are played hundreds of times in every match, this photograph forms

one of the most remarkable antics in the whole "Guide."

With regard to this question whether it be correct that the spare arm should be stretched out for "counterbalancing" in the forehand drive, the reader may find some significance in the fact that there are *thirty-two photographs* of nearly all the leading "cracks" in "Great Lawn Tennis Players," which all contradict both the statements and the photographs on this subject in the "Guide." In particular, there are Plate 74 of S. H. Smith, Plate 80 of Riseley, Plate 83 of Ritchie, and the others include pictures of the Dohertys, Hillyard, Gore, Cazalet, Wilding, and, lastly, of Mr. Vaile himself (Plates 89 and 90), with his arm in the correct position, and not in the absurd position of the "Guide."

Various photographs of the "cracks" disclose a well-established tendency *in the backhand strokes alone*, doubtless due to some anatomical law, to shoot out the spare arm simultaneously as one plays the stroke with the other one, as may be seen from the Plate showing the finish of the "scissors" stroke (No. 19) in this book. E. R. Allen (whose strokes are about as free from personal fads as those of any player alive) regularly does it in the backhand stroke, not for the purpose of balance, but to assist the movement of the working arm.

CHAPTER X.

THE HALF-VOLLEY.

I MAY observe that Mr. Vaile never shows his ignorance of lawn tennis more clearly than in his description of the half-volley. He marks a point with the letter A *at the centre of his racquet* in Plate 64 of the "Guide," and then he says, "The art in playing this beautiful stroke consists in timing it accurately on to the racquet at A." That is exactly what it does *not* consist in. Anyone who cares to watch that admirable half-volleyer H. L. Doherty, and also W. V. Eaves, will see that the vast majority of their half-volleys are simply *picked up off the ground before they have bounced at all, or more than an inch or two*, and that the ball is struck by the gut close to the frame of the racquet (as in the "Lucerne" photograph, Plate 51), either near the head of the bat or near the side when the stroke is played with a horizontal racquet.

Of course there are certain cases in the hurry of play when the ball gets up to the centre of the bat, but I have successfully played enough thousands of these strokes myself, and have seen it played enough by the cracks, to say definitely that as regards the correct type of half-volley at lawn tennis the ball is picked up right off the "floor" by that part of the gut of the racquet which lies close to the frame, either at the side or at the head, and that the bounce is "smothered" altogether. If anyone doubts it let him watch H. L. Doherty and Eaves on the covered courts. By this

means one obtains a control over the ball and a power of steering it otherwise impossible in the case of half-volleys. Hence the following remark about Plate 65 of the "Guide" is simply misleading when applied to the commonest and the most correct type of half-volley at lawn tennis.

"Against a player who uses much rotation," says Mr. Vaile, "the half-volley is a very risky stroke to try, for it is so hard, against a man who chops, for instance, to time the ball on to the centre of the racquet." No doubt it is, but when the stroke is played as the best English half-volleyers play it, the ball is not timed at all on to the centre of the racquet, and the rotation from "chops" or "cuts" does not matter a straw, because it is smothered by the act of picking the ball off the ground with the racquet, which prevents the rotation from acting by smothering the bounce at its birth. Anyone who volleys as much at the net as the present writer is bound constantly to use this stroke both in Singles and Doubles in order to get out of many otherwise hopeless difficulties, and to gain time. It is also most useful in an emergency for a man who runs up on his service much when he gets a ball pitched at his feet.

I am tempted to reproduce here (Plate 51) a strange forehand half-volley played backwards, which practically won the match for me in the final of the Lucerne Championship in 1903. My opponent, L. H. Escombe, was within a point of 5—3 in the third set after I had won the first two, and I was serving into his left court. I must have been slow in getting up to the net after my service, for he pitched the return smartly at my right foot quite 3½yds. from the net. By a desperate effort I stopped and turned nearly round as I saw the ball

Plate 51. The "Lucerne" Stroke.
A Forehand Half-volley played backwards (with front of racquet) as the player moves in the opposite direction. A valuable Emergency Stroke when one is almost passed by the ball. Note grip of racquet.

coming, and bolted out of the court backwards to my left, making the half-volley as I did so behind my back and right out of sight, as shown in the Plate. As a matter of fact, I half-volleyed the ball about 4in. over the net, and my opponent was so astonished that he made no effort to reach it. Had he done so I should have been helpless, for the effort carried me so far out of court with my back to the net that I had not the ghost of an idea of what had happened to the return until Escombe told me. The ball came too far before I could stop myself to enable me to return it in any other way than by a sudden run backwards. The stroke was played from the front of bat and with the forehand, but in a backward direction, so that it was not a backhand stroke but a forehand half-volley played backwards.

I should say of the half-volley generally that it is an emergency stroke, that it is oftenest played with the head of the bat downwards, and that by swinging the spare arm forwards with the racquet in that stroke as one plays it one gets some assistance in placing the ball into the desired spot.

The power of placing in this stroke is greatly increased by picking the ball off the ground instead of allowing it to rise five or six inches, as in the Vaile pictures. W. V. Eaves is the neatest exponent of it that I ever saw, owing to his clean and incisive touch. I am greatly indebted to it myself for winning many thousand aces, by means of a surprise stroke, when volleying near the net. I have mostly found that one "brings off" these strokes best either when one has a winning lead or when the position is desperate and it is necessary to save a particular ace after it seems practically lost.

I have inserted two Plates here (Nos. 52 and 53) showing the half-volley: first, played forehanded with the head downwards, and, secondly, backhanded with the horizontal racquet. The forehand half-volley with a *horizontal racquet* is an extremely useful stroke for placing the ball across the court during rests of volleys in a Single when both players are near the net and when the same results simply cannot be obtained with the racquet held head downwards. The position for this stroke may be seen in Plate 38.

I have inserted here in Plate 54 a most remarkable position for a backhand half-volley from Plate 136 of "Great Lawn Tennis Players." Although possibly adapted for doing up a bootlace, it is safe to say that this attitude is impossible for half-volleying. Both the position of the ball and the attitude are copied from life.

Plate 52. Forehand "Vertical" Half-volley.

Plate 53. Backhand Half-volley with horizontal racquet.

Not Guaranteed.
Plate 54. The "Bootlace" Attitude for a Backhand Half-volley. Rather rare in real life.
After P. A. Vaile.

CHAPTER XI.

TACTICS IN SERVING.

I COME now to deal with the sixty pages of "instructions" with which the "Guide" concludes.

"Theoretically," says Mr. Vaile, "it is wrong to go in (to the net) on a short, badly-placed service, but in actual practice it frequently pays," &c. It is often *not* theoretically wrong to do it if (1) an opponent has a poor forehand or backhand drive, as frequently happens; or (2) if the running in perceptibly "flusters" him. But if he has a sound forehand, it is often simply suicide to run in on a weak service.

And here is another gem which will be carefully noted by a player who wishes to become mere "food for powder" against any good "passing" driver of the Allen and Gore type. "One should get right up to the net as quickly as he can unless it looks as though he may be out-lobbed. In that case he may risk having to play a dropping volley a little inside the service line, *and not rush up quite so fast or so far as he would on a good ball.*" Mr. E. R. Allen and other itinerant tennis players should certainly present Mr. Vaile with an "illuminated address" in default of anything more substantial, for so ably advising players to do the very thing which will most surely compass their ruin against good drivers. The man who

neither will nor will not come up, but stops about the service line, is just the one I should like to meet, *especially in a Double*. If one runs in at all it is infinitely safer to do it thoroughly, and *get right up close to the net*. I know of no cardinal rule in tennis tactics which is more important, or easier to say, or more difficult to do, than this one. Yet the man who gets oftenest right up to the net after his service (if it be anything of a service at all) in most cases is likely to win the match.

Mr. Vaile also says: "Do not consistently run in on the service unless it is paying you very well to do so. Your opponent gets used to it, and it does not worry him so much as it will if you come *running in on odd occasions so that he does not know when to expect you.*" This advice affords a further strong reason for the "illuminated address" to Mr. Vaile that I have just advocated. *If you are going to run up at all, you should do it constantly. Half-measures mean ruin in this manœuvre. If your service is good* and well placed you win, because your opponent *does* expect you, and because the *moral effect is to "put him off," not because he does not expect you.* I have a strong belief that an attack in this direction, if only it be spirited and persistent, would bring about the downfall of cracks by unknown players much oftener than at present. Running in on the service is merely an example of the maxim of Napoleon: "You must not fear defeat. *If you brave it you drive it into the enemy's ranks.*" This particular manœuvre in hundreds of cases in my own experience alone enabled me to "pull a match out of the fire" in the nick of time. It is a particularly reliable asset for anyone with a nervous system, because the constant winning

Plate 55. Position at Start of Forward American Service, with de Borman's grip of the racquet.

of his own service may enable the player to "play himself in," and collect the scattered remnants of his "form" while doing so. A really good American service would greatly assist the "runner-in."

The American services consist, roughly, in an overhead or at least over-shoulder delivery, whereby the ball is struck with a glancing blow *in an upward direction*, which imparts to it a spin or rotatory movement (when the stroke is powerfully executed), causing the ball to bound, especially on a wet court, with extraordinary eccentricity. The bound, of course, varies according as the upward glancing blow is administered from left to right (plain American), or from right to left (reverse American).

The result of this upward, glancing blow and the forward "spin" produced by it is that when the ball bounces, as by the rules of the game it must be allowed to bounce in the case of the service, it violently "skids" (to put it roughly) when the forward spin sideways with which it has been endowed is acted on by the solid ground. A weapon of attack in lawn tennis is thereby capable of being developed to an extent of which at present few of us have any practical idea, because, unlike the Americans, we have not had baseball to teach us what can be done with the spinning ball. Plate 54 will give the reader a good idea of the position of the body and racquet at the start of the forward American service. The grip shown is that of de Borman. The theory of rotation is common knowledge in America (owing to this cause, viz., baseball), and its practical demonstration in lawn-tennis services is also fairly common there, although, according to Mr. Paret, only one or two players had learnt the reverse American twist up to 1904. Mr. Paret's book contains

a brief outline of the mechanics of the subject, and as it is a case of "Cherchez le Parmly Paret" with regard to almost all Mr. Vaile's lawn tennis "doctrines," I have no doubt that in this, as in other respects, he found him useful. Anyhow, half an hour spent beside a New York court, combined with a smattering of lawn tennis and some knowledge of the mechanics of a spinning ball, would enable any intelligent person, if so disposed, to produce any number of photographs of the way to play the service, together with reams of explanatory matter. For it is easy enough to assume the positions for this service before the camera; but the crucial point of the whole business, viz., the getting of "work" or "effect" on the ball, is not shown by the camera at all, but by practice.

I do not make the slightest attempt to underrate the value of the overhead twist services in lawn tennis, although I deny altogether the assertion that they are the most important strokes in the game. On the contrary, we have seen players armed with almost every variety of patent twist service pitted against those who have none, but who know how to hit hard, use the shoulder and follow the ball through, with the result that the "twisters" have been beaten time after time. S. H. Smith and R. F. and H. L. Doherty scarcely possessed a twist stroke among them when they defeated, in the seasons 1905-6, the very finest "twisters" from America and Australia.

I have looked into the book on "Swerve" which Mr. Vaile has published. In the article on the rotation of a golf ball, the typical illustration from the game which he offers us shows a *sliced drive* of about 200 yds., which is *holed out*. This is not so typical a stroke as he seems to imagine. His photographs,

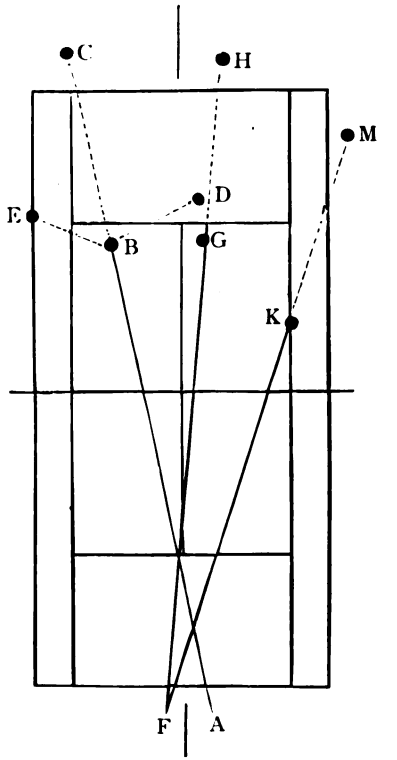

DIAGRAM OF VARIOUS SERVICES.

The line BC in the diagram shows the bound of an ordinary Overhead Service, hit hard on a fast court. The line BD gives a rough idea of the bound of a "Forward" American Service, for which see Plate 55. The line BE shows roughly the bound of a "Reverse" American Service, for which see Plate 46. In the left court the line FM shows a sudden alteration of the direction of a Plain Overhead Service without alteration of the server's position, when one's opponent shows by his position that he expects a service about the point H. This most useful surprise manœuvre is effected chiefly by working the thumb.

To face page 104

however, *do not show the most difficult and essential thing in the matter at all, viz., the amount of "work" which the server gets on the ball.* The camera does not show the extent to which the abdominal muscles are used, on which the quality of the service chiefly depends.

"Both in serving and returning the service, especially in Doubles," says Mr. Vaile, "the value of serving *down the centre of the court* is not generally realised. In Doubles it practically cuts off the telling side-line shot, and enables the man at the net to *wander nearer the middle,* while in Singles its importance is very great." Mr. Vaile showed by a diagram, which he published in the *Field* in the spring of 1905, that he referred to services beside the centre-line in *both the right and left courts without distinction.*

Now, there are hundreds of players in this country who, like myself, know what it is like to run up to the net against a man with a good forehand drive, such as Smith, Gore, F. L. Riseley, Boucher, E. R. Allen, R. and H. Doherty, Hillyard, Ridding, Barrett, and others who are less accurate but too numerous to mention. Such players also know, as I do, that if one serves a ball into the *left* court down the centre-line, and then runs up to the net, in at least 70 per cent. of cases it simply means "sudden death" to that rally, as the striker kills the ball there and then with a low "slog" into the "wings" of the court. I am known to have made as much use of "running in" as most people, but I say without hesitation that in playing a good forehand driver unless the striker is standing so far over towards his left that the centre service into the left court

will possibly go right out or nearly out of his reach, it is a good deal more than risky to attempt it. But, of course, not everyone has a first-class forehand. As for the rest of the quotation, if the man at the net does "wander nearer the middle" when the service is into the left court, I know plenty of ladies and men who would instantly pass him "like a shot" with a forehand drive to his right. One soon gives up "wandering" movements in first-class Doubles, although "rushes" across are often useful.

At page 180 Mr. Vaile says: "If your opponent is running in at you, *soft*, quick-dropping cross-court shots are the deadliest passes." In the course of nearly a dozen seasons of "running in" I believe I was "passed" ten times by a hard low drive for once by a soft cross-court pass, although this was partly due to the prevailing indifference to the value of these shots. In many cases, if the court be fiery and the service fast and of a fine length, the soft cross-court passes, although invaluable at times, especially off second services, are a sheer impossibility. In any case, and on any kind of court, players such as Allen, Gore, and Smith have demonstrated beyond doubt (1) that hard hitting is the staple defence against running in; (2) that in such cases *the harder the hit, and the closer to the tape* (with safety) *the flight of the ball, the better it is*. It is most necessary to remember this in view of the nonsense from the "Guide" which I am about to set forth about slow returns and drives 2ft. above the net. I am not now talking theory, but simply stating facts known to every observant player who has any notion of volleying and has played some of the drivers I have mentioned above.

The chapter on "Passing Strokes" in "Secrets of

Lawn Tennis" will clear me from the imputation of under-valuing the slow passing shot, but experience prevents me from being blind to the fact that *hard hitting is the staple defence* (and offence as well) against running in on the service. The chief reason why this is so is that *fearless low drives of the service tend greatly to demoralise the runner-in.* If only the drive be *low enough and hard enough, it should often be driven straight at the advancing server.* But this only applies to a real "slog" if one's opponent is good at low volleying.

At page 178 there is a short but complete *réchauffé* of Mr. Parmly Paret's "centre theory." If any player has the curiosity to do so he can find in the article on "Parmly Paret's Book" (see "Secrets of Lawn Tennis") an *exposé* of the absurdity of the "principles" illustrated in Fig. 3 of the "Guide" (page 179).

The next paragraph, although not strictly *apropos* here, cannot well be omitted.

Mr. Vaile calls the following "the soundest of sound advice," which I am very much inclined to doubt: "When you have played your stroke always make for that part of the court which is most exposed. *Don't wait to see what your opponent is going to do,* but make for the open spot without hesitation." It is all very well to talk glibly like this, but before any such assertion can be made an answer must be given to the questions: What kind of a return have you made? Is your opponent good at placing? Is his position in the court at the moment strong or otherwise? If your return is not very hard, and your opponent is good at driving and placing, *he will see you have dis-*

closed your intention, and are running for a certain spot, before he makes his return, and will, consequently, at once bang the ball at the spot you have just left, where you are not, whatever his original intention may have been. Mr. Vaile has certainly well earned that illuminated address from the Allens.

CHAPTER XII.

TACTICS IN DOUBLES.

I HARDLY know any subject on which it is more difficult to write anything worth reading than the Double game. *When all four players are good,* it is a grand and exciting game, but it is astonishing how much of it is practical and how little is theoretical. The value of "smashing" overhead balls, especially from far back in the court, is extreme in Doubles, and only second in that respect to the hard drive off the service. But there is a vast difference between "killing" or "finishing" a ball and merely "smashing" it, because active Double players are so good at haunting the stop-netting for the return of these strokes. There are but few really fine "finishers" of the ball from far back in the court, because this stroke demands correct timing of the body-weight and a certain "fire" or "viciousness" in hitting the ball, as one might hit a horse which was trying to throw him. Next to the forehand "slog" of the service the "killing" of overhead balls in all kinds of Doubles and Mixed Doubles is the great thing. This is partly because so many people rely on the lob "when in doubt" on all occasions in Doubles.

There is an immense amount of skill and excitement in the long rests of low volleys in Doubles, but it is hard to say much about strokes which depend for success chiefly on the "spur of the moment" and keenness to win the point. There is no doubt that most low volleys in Doubles should consist almost entirely of a

forward motion without any swing-back at all, as R. F. Doherty plays them (starting the stroke with his racquet held right back). There is no doubt also that in order not merely to *push* but to *punch* a low forehand volley (underhand) the thumb should not be far across the bat, but just about as in Plate 30 or Plate 32.

To get close up to the net after serving is another most essential thing in Doubles. E. R. Allen is especially strong on the necessity for this. In my opinion, the advantage of the server is at present too great in the Double game, which arises partly from the fact that the server volleys or "smashes" the ball but the striker has to take it off the ground. I fancy that if the results of first-class Double matches during a season were tabulated it would be found that the odds are between five and ten to one on the server. An extra back-line, say 1½yds. behind the present base-line, from which the server would have to play, is certainly worthy of a serious trial as a solution of the difficulty. At present the striker-out, confronted with the very fast services so common here (the placing of which is often suddenly varied with great skill), and with both opponents close up at the net to slaughter anything but an able stroke, mostly returns a fast first service in the belief not that he will save the point, but that he will merely have a sporting try at what is often practically impossible. I certainly think something ought to be done to improve his chance. It is no uncommon thing for a good server to go right through a first-class Double without once losing his service game.

The real fact about success in Doubles is that when all four players possess a certain degree of skill, and are not conspicuously weak in smashing, low volleying, and returning the service, success is mainly a psycho-

logical matter, and depends on the strength of the desire which each side possess to win, and also (most important of all) on the extent to which a pair find that they can rely on each other, or "hit it off" as it is called.

There is probably no game in the world in which a man who plays it keenly has a better opportunity than in a Double to discover the real worth of his partner by the way he either supports him or "lets him in" during a close, and often uphill, match. This is the reason why the natural tie of brotherhood (as shown in the case of various Double-playing brethren) or a really sound feeling of friendship and goodwill between Double-players counts for so much, because under its influence a player will often perform feats far in advance of his ordinary form, as I have myself witnessed more than once. Plenty of things constantly occur in Doubles to test that relationship considerably, as when, for example, one man throws away an easy chance at a critical part of the game, or "poaches" a return and misses it.

The captain of the Kent cricket team lately quoted a couplet which ought to apply to Double-players:

> Never a jealousy, never a strife,
> Darkened our mutual cricketing life.

There is no other part of the "Guide" in which Mr. Vaile so conclusively demonstrates his ignorance of the tactics of good lawn tennis as it is played in tournaments as in the section dealing with "The Double Game," at page 181. He says: "The value of the central service or return has never been fully recognised by lawn-tennis writers, but that famous tactician Mr. E. G. Meers is strongly of opinion that it is a most valuable form of attack."

I have already pointed out that a central service into the right court is a totally different thing from a central service into the left court, because in the former case the ball is put to one's opponent's backhand (unless he succeeds in running round it), whereas in the latter case it is put to his forehand. If the tennis writers have ignored the central stroke, it is not for lack of examples, since it is played several thousand times at every good tournament, especially into the right court, and into the left also, when one's opponent is standing unduly far from the centre of the court, or is weak on his forehand, or simply for a change.

Mr. Vaile then proceeds to deal with "the centre drive" in the following passage, which I particularly commend to the notice of practical tournament players:

"*The Centre Drive.*—This is perhaps the best and safest return in a Double. Frequently there will be some doubt as to who will take it, and it is thus allowed a free passage; frequently also that same momentary hesitation, even when it is played, causes the stroke to be imperfect. Quite often when there is plenty of lift on the ball your opponent lets it go, and has the mortification of seeing the forward spin bring it down well within the court. Then he won't take any more risks, and 'goes for everything,' so that very often you get the benefit of the doubt so far as regards your length, and as you are running no risks with side lines you have quite a good chance of scoring. The centre drive, especially if the man at the net allows you plenty of room, as he not infrequently does by standing too near his side line, is a very paying shot, and quite the safest return, particularly for a fast drive."

Mr. Vaile undoubtedly surpasses himself in this

passage. In the first place, *the return down the centre cannot be played at all off a ball played near the side line of either court.* It is a geometrical impossibility. One, therefore, needs a service more or less "built" for the stroke, viz., one which pitches near the centre line. In advocating a central drive as a staple return of the service, a writer with any practical knowledge of good tennis would certainly have remarked that it was only possible to make it off a particular kind of service. Secondly, the central drive from the right court will usually be a backhand drive if the service be of good length, so as to prevent the striker from running round it. It will, in most cases, be a backhand drive right on to the racquet of the man at the net whose forehand covers that spot in the great majority of cases when the service is into the right court. Against good players such a stroke in about 90 per cent. of cases is mere food for powder.

"Frequently," says Mr. Vaile, "there will be some doubt as to who will take it." *Frequently there won't.* If the Allens give one or two such balls in a whole match a free passage past both of them, through a misunderstanding, the party in fault and the bystanders usually hear a good deal about it. As for "momentary hesitation," I have always found remarkably little of that among good Double players. *If the striker drives up the centre from the left court he drives it on to the forehand of the server running in to volley, which is just where a good volleyer would soonest have it.* I do not, of course, assert that a really fine centre drive from the left court *may* not beat the runner-up or pass through the gap between the two opponents, but *it is sheer nonsense to say that a drive on to the forehand of one or other of one's opponents* (viz., of the man at the

are all very well for garden-party tennis, but I have seen plenty of lady-players who, like Mrs. Greville, or Mrs. Hillyard, or Miss Douglass, could steer the ball from the back of the court anywhere they pleased along the whole range of the net, and who would tend to shake some of his advice pretty considerably. "The man must dart across and cut off the lady's return every time he can. This makes her seek the side lines, and frequently she goes over them." Frequently she *doesn't*, as I know pretty well. "Unless the lady tries a side-line pass, *which she will only do now and again*, or a lob, which she considers *infra dig.* as a regulation shot [Miss Shackle was not troubled in that way], she has practically nothing left but the cross-court shot." The plain fact about the first-rate lady Mixed players is that if one wants to run across one usually has to go far into the other court and then deal with a fast drive about an inch above the net as best one can, or else the lady "spots" what one is going to do, and calmly bangs the return with unerring aim into the spot one has just vacated. Of course, poaching is *the* thing if one's lady opponent is on the back line, but if she be "useful" she can force the "poacher" to keep in his own court, for fear of being passed, far more than some people would imagine.

Some of these lady experts would chuckle considerably on reading Mr. Vaile's assertion on page 188 that "*on every occasion* during the rest when a man has seen the shot decided on and the racquet half-way through the stroke he should charge across even unto the single side lines and cut off the return." A man who did this sort of thing against the best lady-players would be simply annihilated in about a quarter

of an hour, because in many cases, especially in running across from the *left* court, he would never reach the wide low drives of the lady expert with his *backhand* at all, and often when he did he would only make a defensive shot, which the man on the other side would promptly return into the place he had just left. The value of "poaching" in a "Mixed" is immense, but it would be fatal to try it *in every case* against even a medium lady-player.

I do not think the following passage from Mr. Parmly Paret would find many followers among the English "Mixed" players:

"In Mixed Doubles in England they play with the man at the net and the woman at the base-line, whereas *we Americans think this is distinctly unsound, and prefer to play with the woman at the net and the man at the back of the court.* . . . As it is practically impossible for any one man to cover the full width of the net, *so it becomes an easy matter to keep the ball out of his reach.* [Does it?] *With the man at the net here, he is generally kept out of the game* [Is he?] *and the woman is forced to do all of the work. This must sooner or later prove to be the undoing of her side* [! ! !] With the woman at the net, on the other hand, *she will have to make fewer strokes, and has all the advantage when she does play the ball, since it must be on the volley* [truly a great advantage]. The woman, being necessarily the weaker player, is generally the object of the attack, *and she is in less danger of error and more dangerous to the opponents when at the net.*" There are about three ladies altogether of whom this last sentence is true.

I now come to the question in lawn-tennis tactics which concerns the proper position in the court for a

of his book. "In the old days two partners played Doubles with one man at the net and the other in the back of the court, but modern tactics have made this position *thoroughly untenable.* With the opponents in these positions a volleying pair *have always open to them a winning stroke* through the 'open diagonal.' [What a pity the Dohertys did not know this last summer!] The accompanying diagram will show how hopeless such position-play is against close net players."

Yes; but how about the two victories of Smith and Riseley over the Doubles champions of the world at Wimbledon in 1902 and 1906, in spite of the diagram and the "open diagonal"? I had a fair experience myself of Smith on the back line in a Double in the Semi-Final at Newcastle in 1904, and at the end of it I understood how a freak with a forehand like that is very liable to play havoc with tennis dogmas.

Mr. Paret continues (at page 182): "Under the present rules the serving side is able to assume the attacking position at the net at once. *As it is impossible for both sides to play close to the net at the same time it follows that the strikers-out must retire to the defensive position behind the base-line* until such time as they are able to dislodge their opponents from the coveted net position." It doesn't. Although all four players cannot play right up at the net at once *in good Doubles, they all play frequently about the service lines at once during rests of low volleying.* If a pair are good at driving and low volleying *it is the height of folly for the partner of the striker-out to retire behind the base-line, when he could stay and volley from the service line,* ready to seize a chance to get close up as soon as one of their opponents should be driven back.

The moral effect of leaving the whole court empty is immense, as is pointed out below. I have no hesitation in saying here that, having regard to Mr. Parmly Paret's "centre theory," his advice against learning the American service, his remarks on Doubles and Mixed, &c., I consider his volume, although far abler than Mr. Vaile's, one of the very worst lawn-tennis books that have yet appeared.

The following is Mr. Paret's advice about the American services:

"Although I do not think the American twist a difficult stroke to learn, I would not advise a young player to neglect other practice in order to master it, for I doubt if it would repay the effort. It requires much practice to keep up, and often is no more effective than a straight overhand delivery." Often it *is* more effective, especially for a change.

"It is always a safe rule in Doubles," he says (at page 183), "to stay back as far as the base-line whenever an opponent is volleying." If he be volleying overhead, yes; but if underhand, absolutely no. It is in fact in that case *a certain rule for getting beaten*, if one happens to be playing a good volleying pair, unless one is no use at all at low volleying. In that case nothing but great severity in driving will atone for the deficiency.

Mr. Paret indirectly denounces the position at the point c in the following terms: "In Doubles, Baddeley's 'forbidden zone' between the service line and the base-line is an untenable spot. Skilful players in Doubles never hesitate long in this territory, and they will always be found ready to volley in front of the service line, or ready to defend against volleying opponents from behind the base-line."

I have heard it said by a close observer of the Double play of the Baddeleys that their most usual position was within a yard of either side of the service line. I have often seen them there myself when they have been playing the Allens, or other good volleyers like Renshaw and Barlow. For the reasons set out below, I think it is a mistake to declare the whole back court "untenable" and "forbidden." For example, if I were playing in a Double handicap with a partner who sometimes put up balls for the other side to smash, I would much rather stand a little inside the base-line than outside it, in order to have a better chance of reaching diagonal smashes.

This subject was dealt with at page 32 of "Lifting the Veil," where I remarked that it was not the fact, as Mr. Vaile had asserted, that good English Double players in general stood close up to the net, but that it was good policy for F. L. Riseley to do it when partnered by Smith, because of the exceptional severity of Smith's return of the service. That observation has since been justified by the fact that these players have beaten the Dohertys, and have again won the Doubles Championships, and that Riseley, as usual (I believe), throughout the match assumed this position when Smith was returning service. There was a further reason for it in the fact that Smith does not volley much, and Riseley plays a sort of "Mixed Double" with him.

The example of the Renshaws, the Baddeleys, the Allens, and (to a great extent) the Dohertys, and also of my actual experience of Double play (for what it is worth), have long ago convinced me that in good Doubles the striker's partner ought not to be further back than a yard behind the service line when the

striker is returning service, if he be a good driver. In weak handicap Doubles, or in "Mixed" when there is a danger that one's partner will "put up" returns within reach of the man at the net, one should stand further back at that moment, in order to avoid being "peppered," and to reach the "smashes" if possible. But in good Doubles if both the striker and his partner stand right back there is, in the first place, *the highly encouraging effect which an absolutely empty court produces on the other side.*

Secondly, *it is absolute lunacy to leave the court empty of both players, because one of these latter will have to run nearly 40ft. to reach a soft drop or cut, which there is every inducement to make under those circumstances.* A good Double player, apart from occasional blunders, which are not the rule but the exception with him, either sends back low returns, *which his opponent has to volley underhand,* or he lobs over his opponent's head, or he drops a ball slowly across court, which has also to be returned underhand. *In all these cases the position of the partner just behind the service line is infinitely better for attacking than it would be if he were beyond the base-line away from the scene of action.* With a good partner he will not be peppered with smashes off the return of the service, but will only have to deal with quick low volleys, because (1) the server's partner will be unable to run across with safety, and (2) the server receiving a hard low return can do nothing else but volley it underhand.

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no mention of the fact that there is a third position besides those at the net and on the base-line, viz., near the service line, which is far better than either of the other two in good Doubles. He then makes the following statement, which will speak for itself (page 185): "When the return of the striker-out justifies it, they must both go in together, *still in line and still the same distance apart from each other*, so as to cover as much of the court as possible." There is no passage in the "Guide" which more clearly shows Mr. Vaile's inexperience of the actual rush of good Double play. With the whole court conveniently lying empty before them the opposing pair may return the ball into a thousand different spots and at a thousand different angles. To suggest, as Mr. Vaile does, that the other two players are to behave like a couple of soldiers helping to "form fours" on a parade-ground, and solemnly advancing "in line and still the same distance from each other" (when one of them in actual fact may have to run like a bolting rabbit away out to the side, leaving his partner to defend the whole court), will seem comical enough to anyone accustomed to the hurry-scurry of fast Double play.

If one of the players has to go far out to the left or right to return the ball, we should then see his partner in order to keep his distance haunting the side lines next to him, and leaving the whole court unguarded. Yet Mr. Vaile solemnly asks us to believe that all this is "settled tactics." He attempts to prove it by means of the following chain of bare assertion. First, he says, he has been told that Smith and Riseley beat the Dohertys in 1902, when the latter adopted the formation of placing the striker's partner at the net when the former was returning service. *He does*

not mention the fact that Riseley did the same thing on that occasion. It may be true that in general the striker's partner should not be up at the net, but it does not follow that he should, therefore, leave the court empty and retreat beyond the back line. Secondly, he *alleges* that on one occasion Wilding and Mahony "looked like beating the Dohertys" until the latter both stood back. Thirdly, he says that R. F. Doherty and Eaves "looked very like losing to Greville and Mann" until they both stood outside the court. I don't know what he "takes the tennis public for." Fourthly, he *alleges* that the Dohertys were beaten (*in a knock-up match*) by Dunlop and Brookes through standing close up. Fifthly, he says that the Dohertys stood right back when playing Ward and Wright. I do not contend for a moment that it is usually safe to stand close up. I think the proper place is within about a yard of either side of the service line, but to contend on the "evidence" just quoted that it is "settled tactics" to leave the whole court empty is worthy only of Mr. Vaile.

The reader will notice that in the diagram which this chapter contains there is an area marked G and shown black. The reason for the marking of this area is as follows: In "Great Lawn Tennis Players" Mr. Vaile commented on the position assumed by Smith and Riseley when Smith was returning service, viz., at the points A and B, as follows:—"Unless Smith's return (of the service from the point A) *is nearly perfect*, H. L. Doherty (at the point F) has the enormous gap between Riseley and his partner for cross-court volleys. This is the weakness of the position of the striker-out's partner in English Doubles." I have remarked elsewhere (in "Lifting the

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The example of the [illegible] Allens, and (to a great [illegible] of my actual experience [illegible] worth), have led me [illegible] Doubles the striker's [illegible] back than a [illegible]

striker is returning service, if he be a good driver. In weak handicap Doubles, or in "Mixed" when there is a danger that one's partner will "put up" returns within reach of the man at the net, one should stand further back at that moment, in order to avoid being "peppered," and to reach the "smashes" if possible. But in good Doubles if both the striker and his partner stand right back there is, in the first place, *the highly encouraging effect which an absolutely empty court produces on the other side.*

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long we see Mr. Vaile entering political life over here, not as a Pro-Boer, but as a *Pro-Brewer* and a Protectionist.

He repeats the popular superstition that players who are inclined to put on flesh should avoid all fatty and sugary substances. Now it is certain that in most cases a player taking such exercise as tournament tennis will need to eat substantially, at all events, of *something*. Fatty and sugary substances have been proved to be the chief sources of muscular energy (fat is two and a quarter times stronger in that way than sugar), so that considering the player's temporary occupation it would seem to be rather irrational to cut him off from fat and sugar.

But if he does not eat these things in some form or other, the only thing left for him is proteid. It is now established that one can "run to fat" on proteid as easily as possible, because the digestion has the power, when it receives more proteid than it actually requires, of extracting the nitrogen from it, and storing it up as fat. People think sugar and fat (*e.g.*, cream) are necessarily fattening because they eat them along with a great deal of *fattening proteid*, instead of using them, or compounds of them, largely as staple foods, as did the gladiators, who certainly took plenty of exercise. Moreover, proteid *necessarily* generates uric and sulphuric acids in the body, and unless excess of these acids is prevented they will poison the system of an athlete, not, of course, seriously, but sufficiently to impair his efficiency. The effects of uric and sulphuric acids on the body are discussed in "The Great Diet Question" by the present writer.

There are two subjects connected with training, viz., fruit and baths, which I desire to mention here. When

the nervous system is used or strained by some mental or physical exercise, such as a lawn-tennis match, it has been found that the nerve-centres pass in the process from an alkaline to an acid state. The recuperation of the nervous system after this strain on it depends on the supply of sufficiently alkaline blood, which washes away the acid and restores the nerve-centres to their normal alkaline condition.* The alkaline matter in the blood, especially sodium, is best obtained from fresh ripe fruits or steamed vegetables, which contain the necessary minerals in an organic form. Moreover, the fruit contains large supplies of potassium in its most wholesome form (viz., combined with a fruit-acid), and as potassium is the chief salt found in muscle, and used up by exercise, the value of fresh ripe fruit will be readily understood. So that lawn-tennis players, whether they be omnivorous or frugivorous, or anything else, should be careful, if they desire to avoid staleness, to make fresh fruit *a staple portion of every meal* (as a general rule), and to disregard the words of Mr. Sibson in "Everyday Chemistry" when he says that fruit is "not intended to form any staple portion of our food in this climate," but is merely "a pleasant thing to eat when we are not hungry."

My remarks in "Diet and Training"† about the need for plain and hot restoratives (such as coffee, soup, &c.) after long matches and about the pernicious effects of drugs on tournament tennis are supported by a far greater authority who said at St. Helena: "Take a dose of medicine once and you may have to take a hundred others," and that when one is ill the best thing is to "ride eight or ten leagues to get into a perspiration,"

*Lohmann: "Healthy Blood." †In "Secrets of Lawn Tennis."

and then to drink "warm diluents" such as barley-water, and no wine. I also forget to mention, in discussing the best drinks for lawn tennis in "Diet and Training," that about the best drink, in my opinion, when one is actually playing a match, as a thirst-quencher, not as a hot restorative (such as tea or coffee), is as small a quantity as possible of nearly neat, sweetened limejuice, provided it is pure. Whenever it is possible one should drink sparingly during a match, remembering the words of the Dohertys, "Two lemon squashes will take the fire out of anybody's game."

With regard to baths, I recently carried out an experiment as to their effect on "form" which may be of interest to some players. For some weeks beforehand and during the five weeks which the writing of the present work required I habitually wrote all the morning and played golf all the afternoon. But during the first part of the time I cycled six miles before breakfast in order to bathe in a certain lake. Afterwards I discontinued the bath until night, and reduced the cycle ride by about half. Under the first régime I used to get round the golf links in about 92, but was never under 90. Under the second one I was usually four to five strokes better than before.

I am tempted to add here one or two other personal experiences of training which can be skipped by those who are not interested in them. I had occasion to spend a great part of the last eighteen months looking up authors in the British Museum Library, and writing several books besides tennis books. Under these circumstances the only athletics at hand consisted of golf or cross-country runs. I found that when

one compared the results of a single round of golf with a nightly trot of three or four miles in thirty to forty minutes the balance was very greatly in favour of the latter as regards its effect in *the vital matter of sound sleep after mental occupation*, and, to a lesser extent, of appetite. Mind, will, capacity, everything, are greatly affected by sound sleep, and although two rounds of golf are about equal in that respect to the running, the time consumed is *vastly greater*. Of course, one needs some exercise, such as clubs or ball-punching for the arms, but otherwise the running is the nearest thing to good tennis. The English are the least rude or interfering nation on earth in an unusual proceeding of this kind, and there remains merely the question of "talk" as regards the apparent eccentricity of taking one of the healthiest and quickest forms of exercise in the world, viz., running. Once a week I usually had from ten to twenty miles across sequestered fields, and remained as healthy while writing this book as if I were playing in tournaments and writing nothing. But a great deal of fruit and cream and lime-juice and other antiseptic food, no flesh food, and less than an ounce of proteid daily, assisted greatly in producing this result. On the whole, I contend that running is well worth the trouble, especially if one happens to get a heavy chill and wants to get rid of it in twenty-four hours, instead of having a week with doctors and pills. A bath is a necessity after these runs.

Mr. J. H. Taylor, the ex-champion golfer, kindly supplied me with some interesting details about his diet during championship matches. He says that he is most careful to eat very light breakfasts and lunches, because larger meals "thicken the sight" for the

game. He takes his evening meal before six p.m. in the form of a "fish tea," and it practically consists of two dishes and some soup. He avoids baths before matches, but "likes his tub" afterwards.

The English excel chiefly in common sense, yet the remarks which lately appeared in the Press, if the Press really represented the nation, on the subject of sleep and early rising might lead one to imagine that they had all gone mad together. Whereas one schoolmaster announced that he had "given up the fetish of early rising" for his school, there was scarcely a single voice in the Press to claim a single merit for early rising, although it is known to many people that unless one has been up half the night early rising tends to produce a quite distinct clearness of mind and a distinct class of intellectual faculties, of the existence of which we are otherwise only occasionally conscious.

The Catholic Church, which in all such matters is a model of astuteness, takes the fullest advantage of this fact by arranging that many classes of its "staff" workers of both sexes shall habitually rise at what I should consider an unearthly hour in the morning. The great and even decisive effect of early rising on good lawn tennis can easily be proved by anyone with an impartial mind who takes care to retire early enough beforehand. In any case, it is far better for efficiency, within certain limits, to sleep *too little than too much*. Moreover, in those cases a mid-day siesta can mostly be had, which has a great effect on one's tennis afterwards.

The importance of plenty of air in choosing the site of a tennis tournament ground deserves far more attention, from the player's point of view, than it gets. Mr.

Vaile is fond of alluding in his books to a match of mine at Wimbledon when I lost to de Borman. He never states that I won one set with the loss of one game. But although I was puzzled by de Borman's drive, I was beaten quite as much by the fact that I was playing in that sultry oven which the low-lying Wimbledon ground, surrounded on every side by trees and houses (at the bottom of a hill), so often becomes at about two o'clock on a hot day. One bad match does not necessarily go for much. I remember losing to Le Maire de Warzee (another Belgian), on the Riviera, by twelve games to two, but the next time we met (at Wimbledon) I did not lose a set. We have yet to learn what Mr. Vaile's tournament form is like.

There is no doubt that "form" at tennis is a good deal at the mercy of one's present or previous occupation. For example, it is perfectly clear to my mind that if one is going to play an important match after lunch it is the greatest folly (if it can be avoided) to attempt anything substantial in the way of head work beforehand, especially in conjunction with train-travelling. Some players, especially stolid ones, are much less affected by this sort of thing than others, but as one's supply of nervous energy is limited, it is very unfortunate if one has to use up a great part of it in harassing duties "on the day of the race." If one has a good chance of winning one should consider whether it be more important to win the match, or to give up a morning's work, which will inevitably "put a player off," at least to some extent. In general, I should say that a good "knock-up" of a couple of sets before lunch on those occasions gives a considerable "pull" over a player who has spent a busy morning in

an office. I am not suggesting that it is advisable, but merely stating the facts of my own experience, viz., that one cannot play "nervous" games properly after mental work.

One of the finalists for the Championship of 1896, who came within a single stroke of winning, travelled on the same day from Rochester to London, and from there to Wimbledon, which I have no doubt damaged his chances of winning and "shook his arm up." On another occasion, the same player, coming fresh on to the court for a "final," won eighteen games out of nineteen from a player who had just come down from London. It is true that I have seen a man win the Championship after doing so, but I have also seen him have a very poor time of it in subsequent Championships after coming straight out of an office on to the court. I fancy that the reputation Pim obtained by his two victories over that player might not have been quite so brilliant if he had not been playing a tired man.

On the other hand, another player spent the morning in an office in the West of England, lunched in the express on the way up, and then went on to the court at Wimbledon and beat the Dohertys for the Doubles Championship. It is chiefly a question of temperament, but it may, I believe, be generally affirmed that much train-travelling or much mental work on the day of a hard match is a heavy handicap, although it is often unavoidable.

On September 29, 1906, that well-known medical journal the *Lancet*, which strays but rarely into the region of lawn tennis, in the course of an adverse but not unfriendly review of the present writer's last book ("Secrets of Lawn Tennis"), proceeded to dissect a

portion of the article on "Diet," which formed a large part of that book. The reviewer thinks that "the general views [about diet in that article] in their practical relationships are in our opinion quite sound," which is a very considerable admission. He is much less complimentary about "the theoretical and scientific parts," although it can scarcely be said that he discloses the specific grounds on which he condemns them." Anyhow, if he be right in saying that the general views are quite sound in their practical relationships, I am well content to leave the correction of my theoretical explanation of them (in so far as it is wrong) to those who have had a far better scientific training in such matters than I.

But with all due respect for the scientific knowledge of my critic, I am bound to say that his strictures in some cases show that he has not read some of the plainest remarks in my article. Otherwise, he would not have said that "to imagine that fitness can be secured and fatigue prevented by adhering to any one particular line of dietary is manifestly absurd." I quite agree, and I took the trouble to point out at length that Dr. Haig's panacea for immortal strength, viz., salicylate of soda and bread and cheese, was one of the most absurd things in his writings. I also said that I wondered what diet would enable a man to row from Putney to Mortlake without (in Dr. Haig's phrase) "anything approaching fatigue." Perhaps the Harvard crew can tell us, but no one else can. I, however, did assert that fitness was increased by taking no food unsuited to the frugivorous construction of the human frame.

Again, he writes with evidently confident sarcasm about my experiments in lawn-tennis dinners at night

(after playing all day and losing several pounds in weight), which consisted largely of almost nitrogen-free food, such as potatoes and butter, fruit and cream *ad lib.*, and hot tapioca puddings. I asserted that after this kind of meal at the end of prolonged and extraordinarily violent exertion, such as competitive tournament Singles often produce, I felt in every way "fitter" *and stronger* next day than after a dinner with several meat courses. Now, nearly all tournament players will agree with me that, whatever may be the elements which are necessary in diet, if a player does not want them *all* and in abundance after 110 games or so of tournament tennis he never will want them, and further that *if he be not supplied on those occasions with at least a reasonable quantity of every necessary element he will infallibly be as weak as a rat for match-play on the following day.*

Dr. Austin Flint's urea experiments with a man who was attempting to walk about sixty miles per day on a race-track show that *after a large amount of exertion the nitrogenous portions of the muscles are partly broken down by the fatigue.* Hence it is quite clear to my mind that if the medical profession were correct in the importance they attach to proteid one ought to need, and be the better for, a good deal of it after a long day's tennis, whereas my experience is that *it is far better for one's play next day* to stick largely to butter and potatoes, and other vegetables, fruit and cream, and hot milk puddings, although one dish of nitrogenous food is sometimes relished.

I believe that in view of the almost unanswerable facts about herbivorous animals (see "The Great Diet Question") these foods are partially azotised in the body of a lawn-tennis player, and it is noteworthy that

on the question as to what really does happen in the digestion over the assimilation of nitrogenous food the medical mind is at present a blank.

I mentioned the Harvard crew above, and when I read that they intended to feed chiefly on "broiled steaks," containing less than six per cent. of the chief source of muscular energy, and that part of the training consisted in drinking a mixture of champagne and stout, I contrasted it in my own mind with the dietary rules of the ancient Greek athletes at Olympia, who attained to their extraordinary proficiency by *taking no food during training which was unsuited to the frugivorous character of the organs of man*, who lived and throve on barley, figs, milk, and cheese, and who testified that meat made them lumpish and stupid. This great law of diet was also observed by their fellow-citizens at Athens, who carried the arts of statuary and architecture to the highest pitch ever attained (not to mention literature as well), and who lived on barley, figs, oil, honey, milk, cheese, beans, and lupins, except on feast days. I do not suggest that we should abandon French cookery and go back to this, but I do say that in view of these facts it is worth while to see what can be done with French fleshless cookery of mixtures of eggs, beans, and nuts flavoured with cheese and herbs and mushrooms.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHAMPIONSHIPS OF 1905.

THOSE readers who have gone thus far with me will not be surprised to hear that the object of the section in the "Lawn Tennis Guide" headed "English, American, and Australian Lawn Tennis Compared" is to show that "here [in England] in its home lawn tennis has gone back, its standard has deteriorated, its strokes become feeble by comparison with the natural strong shots of old."

Mr. Vaile begins by asserting that Australian lawn tennis has been definitely proved to be "equal to, if not superior to, English." Personally, I should not much mind if it had been so proved, but the facts hardly bear out the assertion.

The evidence on which Mr. Vaile chiefly relies is that "Dunlop and Brookes have in a genuine, hard-fought match defeated the Dohertys in Doubles, and that Mr. Brookes has defeated Mr. H. L. Doherty" in Singles. The "genuine" Double match was *a knock-up at the Queen's Club*, and the Australians never beat the Dohertys in any Double competition. Mr. Brookes defeated Mr. H. Doherty in a match at an "at home" given by the All-England Club after the official competitions were all over, and after Mr. Doherty had won the Singles Championship, the Doubles Championship, and all three matches for the International Cup. Mr. Vaile must be rather hard up for his facts to seek them from a "knock-up" and a club garden-party.

The facts were that in the International competition Australasia was beaten by five matches to nil by America, and America was then beaten by five matches to nil by England. Afterwards this informal match was arranged and the Australians lost again.

Next he gets over the decisive defeat of Mr. Brookes by Mr. Doherty in the English Championship (by three sets to none) by alleging that Mr. Brookes was exhausted by his previous matches. As a matter of fact, he was allowed several clear days of rest before playing the Championship round. One can always find excuses of this kind. Thus it is well known that very few sculling races have been ever lost in which the loser's arm did not "go" before he was beaten.

Next he lays immense stress on the fact that at Wimbledon Mr. Brookes beat four English players, two of whom were nearly old enough to be his father, one was dead out of condition (as shown later on when Eaves beat him), and the remaining one beat him shortly afterwards at Edgbaston. One of the fatherly ones also beat him later on at Dinard. Mr. Brookes won two out of seven Open Singles in which he competed in Europe, and was beaten on level terms by Doherty, Smith, Hillyard, and also by Dunlop, whose form was well known here. Brookes was also beaten by all three Americans, and did not win a match from them, whereas the Americans did not win a match from us. There is no doubt that Mr. Brookes was greatly assisted in making as excellent a show as he did at Wimbledon by the fact that his twist services and other strokes were delivered with the left hand. This advantage would wear off if he played much here, but at first the left hand affords a great "pull" if a player makes the most of it, because he is accustomed to play

right-handed players, but they are not accustomed to play him. I admit that Brookes' overhead twist services were a most useful adjunct of his game, and that last year very few players in England could do likewise; but when, on the strength of a "knock-up" and an impromptu match, and the rest of Mr. Brookes' record, he attempts to assert that "there was demonstrated the *fact* (?) I have always insisted on that the most important strokes in modern lawn tennis are played with cut," I say that the facts of 1905 demonstrated beyond doubt that *hard-hit strokes, and not cut strokes, are the most important thing in modern as in past lawn tennis.* In other words, *no amount of cutting or chopping will make up for lack of severity.*

The facts of 1905 which go to show this are as follows:—

1. H. L. Doherty, playing with no twist services and no cut to speak of, decisively beat Brookes for the Championship of England, without losing a single set.

2. Smith also, by hard hitting alone, and *even without volleying,* beat him at Edgbaston, and reached 4—2 in the fifth set at Wimbledon. Mr. Vaile says in one of his books that Smith's drive is *essentially in bad form.*

3. The two American champions, Ward and Larned, who had the twist services at their fingers' ends, were beaten most decisively by Smith, and also by H. L. Doherty, while Gore beat Wright (who won the American Championship that year) without the aid of any twist or "lift" whatever.

4. The brothers Doherty won the Doubles that year by hitting, and not by cutting. They also beat the Americans for the Davis Cup.

In view of Mr. Vaile's statements about the 1905 Championships he seems to me to regard the writing of a book on lawn tennis as he would a game of poker, with the public and the Press as the other players. The fact is that he has done his best to turn English lawn tennis into a game of *chopping and cutting, and not primarily of hard hitting as it is at present.* All who would be sorry to see a manly and most forcible game ruined by the exaggeration of one class of stroke, viz., the twisting and spinning of the ball at the expense of hard, solid driving, will refuse to further his attempts on the game. He even talks about the "chop from the base-line" as a substitute for driving. If I were going to play in England again I should recommend my opponents to study his suggestions. A good volleyer would slaughter a "chop from the base-line" nearly every time, because *he would have any amount of time to get to it.*

The twist is useful in the service and the cut in close volleying at the net, but the hard low drive is the foundation of the game and forms its chief claim to popularity. Instead of this, Mr. Vaile asserts that "three-fourths of the modern game consists of cut strokes." Nothing happened at the Championship of 1905 to prove it, but a vast deal *did* happen to disprove it entirely. If any such idea be acted on it will introduce a wretched, finicking style of play, and rob the game of a great part of its virility.

After alleging that his assertions had been proved by the 1905 Championship, Mr. Vaile says: "*That I knew to be inevitable,* for I was only expounding the game as it had come to me from its home, England, and *as I had played it* and loved it for a score of years; as it was played and improved in America, Australia,

and New Zealand." He says this in face of the facts that the Singles and Doubles Championships were won by the English from the best players that America and Australia could produce, and that the Davis Cup was won by the English from the Americans by five matches to nil after the Americans had beaten the Australians by five matches to nil.

Again I ask the reader to consider the plain evidence of the photographs which are reproduced in this volume as to the way he actually *did* play the game. The twist services would have to be a much bigger asset than they are to compensate for the rest of Mr. Vaile's advice. And, in fact, we know from the photographs that his knowledge even of these is not practical. Although loud and positive about English play on paper, he never encounters the Englishman's repartee with the racquet at tournaments.

In the section at the end of the Guide on "The Defective Hold of the Racquet," Mr. Vaile first assumes that the Dohertys hold the racquet for the forehand drive with the thumb across and three-quarters of an inch beyond the handle of the bat on the other side, which I, for one, believe to be an exaggeration. Next he assumes that this is the common English grip for forehand strokes, which I know to be incorrect, and next he assumes that this is the reason why *at present* there are very few rising young players in England. There one has a specimen of the Vaile logic in a nutshell.

He then goes on: "It has robbed English lawn tennis of *half the strokes** and much of the beauty of

* Many of the most valuable strokes in the game are simply a physical impossibility with the Vaile forehand and backhand grips. *Vide*, for example, Plates 23 and 39.

the game, and has . . . reduced a great and scientific game to patball." I ask my readers to consider whether they believe that the Doherty grips of the racquet, *whatever they may be*, have *robbed English lawn tennis of its beauty*, or have *reduced it to patball.*

The works of Mr. Vaile certainly constitute the most formidable distemper with which the rising game of lawn tennis has yet been attacked.

In order to make clear the reason for my criticism in this book, I will take a parallel case.

I myself am not a cricketer, know nothing about the strokes of the game, and (needless to say) have never hit a ball in first-class cricket. One must suppose that I had spent a couple of seasons watching matches at Lord's and the Oval. I must further be supposed to have picked up a smattering of the dynamics of a spinning or swerving ball and to possess some ability and neatness in the drawing of mechanical diagrams. My next step would be the publication of three books, consisting of a complete and wholesale condemnation of the methods and style of all the English crack batsmen, bowlers, wicket-keepers, &c. (except one or two friends), with especially severe criticism of the style of Hirst, Hayward, Hutchings, Burnup, Knox, &c. Then it would be necessary for me, who have never bowled a ball or made a run in first-class cricket, to get a well-known athletic photographer to take about 120 photographs of myself in the various attitudes for playing the strokes at cricket as they ought to be played, and as I alone knew how to play them. Lastly, it would be necessary for me to get the consent of some dignitary to the dedication to him of my books on the science of cricket.

Of course, the reader will at once say that I have drawn here an impossible picture, like something out of "Alice in Wonderland." And no doubt it would be impossible *in the case of any other English game except lawn tennis. But as regards lawn tennis every feature of the sketch is a sober fact.*

CHAPTER XV.

"ANTI-VAILE."

EVERYTHING that exists has some *raison d'être*, and in case the reader who has read the extracts and looked at the photographs previously set forth begins to feel a little puzzled about Mr. Vaile's *raison d'être* as a lawn-tennis critic, I will endeavour to make it clear to him.

In the first place, there is no doubt whatever in my mind that the great defect in the play of the English "cracks," as a whole, is, or was, the monotony of the service at lawn tennis.

Players vary greatly in their susceptibility to *ennui*. I have seen some of them serving the same plain monotonous strokes into the same spots at the end of eighteen years with as little apparent signs of boredom as if they were in their first season. In the same way when a famous golfer had to spend some time in a sanatorium he was observed to spend most of his outdoor time in playing the one hole the sanatorium possessed with a cleek, a mashie, and a putter. No doubt *ennui* is chiefly a matter of the brain, but, be that as it may, I have no doubt whatever in my own mind that if a practical knowledge of the American services were generally diffused in the tennis world it would vastly increase the interest of the game. There is so much variety in the personality and styles of players, and so much excitement about good volleying and driving, that it is certainly worth while to supply

the service with an interest which at present it lacks to some extent.

I believe I have expressed my views about the necessity for the American service strongly enough in Chapter IV., but I am quite clear that it is better to seek information about that service from "cinematographs" of famous players in the act of playing them or from any reliable information they may give than from the instructions of a writer whose own photographs effectually dispose of his claims to be an authority about them.

Next to the American services, which from the start have been his *pièce de résistance*, the "lifting drive" has been of immense use to Mr. Vaile in his growth and development as a lawn-tennis critic, on the true place of which in the game I have already made some observations. Then there has been the substratum of truth in his remarks about the "grip" *in so far as they relate to forehand drives and low volleys*, which has no doubt been easily perceptible to many people, and on the strength of which he has condemned without distinction the use of the thumb across the handle in all forehand strokes, which leaves the matter in far worse confusion than before.

These are practically the whole of the matters relating to lawn tennis on which his rise as a critic has depended, for although his advice about small handles, loose gut, circular racquets, and thin shoes has no doubt been swallowed by some people, it would not in itself have done very much for him, because it is all absolutely contrary to the facts in everyday lawn-tennis experience, whereas there is at least something in the other points. The rest of his fame has been built up by a close and skilful adherence to certain

principles of literary tactics, which are *absolutely essential* to a man who sets himself to write three books on a practical subject, viz., tournament tennis, which he has never learnt, and of which he has had no experience.

First, then, he is a thoroughly able exponent of the great maxim in literature, *If you have nothing to say, say it forcibly and impressively*, and, if necessary, at great length also. When he is laying down the greatest practical absurdities he does it in the manner of Euclid himself proving one of his own propositions. It is no doubt this magnificent air of decision which has drawn forth the admiration of the athletic Press for his apparent knowledge of a little-known subject. For example, in the letterpress to the Plate which is imitated in Plate 1 here he says: "The hand should never be loose; *the arm should never be loose*. Whatever the right arm is doing, the left should be counter-balancing," which when taken as a general rule forms some of the greatest nonsense ever written (as may be seen by more than a score of photographs in "Great Lawn Tennis Players"), but, nevertheless, the Euclidian manner with which it is written will doubtless impress many with the belief that he is enunciating a valuable fact in lawn tennis, although, in fact, the assertion is contrary to mechanics and anatomy, and the common experience of crack players. His books are simply *poker on a large scale*.

After reading Mr. Vaile's works with attention I have come to the conclusion that it is the greatest mistake to suppose for an instant that because his remarks are made in an oracular and incisive manner they necessarily convey, or were ever intended to con-

vey, any definite meaning whatever, except the fact that it was necessary to say something. In this he reminds me of a doctor who upbraided his assistant for doing nothing when called in to a bricklayer with a broken neck and back. "*You must always do something*," was his valuable maxim, and when I read Mr. Vaile's instructions for the lob-volley, viz., that one must get one's but under the ball and hit it before it touches the ground, I recall that sage doctor's advice.

Another invaluable maxim followed by Mr. Vaile may be said to be "If in doubt, talk about 'the great players of America and Australasia.'" There are very few people here to contradict him, whatever he may say on this subject, and it is invaluable for clinching his arguments against the pernicious principles of play which have won the International Cup for several years against all comers. There is no evidence that he ever hit a ball over the net in America, but the fact that he was born in Australasia and has visited America has been of enormous service to him in foisting highly imaginative "comparisons" between the players in those countries and the English, needless to say much to the latter's disadvantage, on English readers. I have had far more practical experience of tournament play in foreign countries than Mr. Vaile, and after comparing the players I have had to meet abroad with those in England I cannot imagine anything more incorrect than Mr. Vaile's assertion of the superiority of the *foreign backhand stroke* (indefinitely) to those of the English.

Another of Mr. Vaile's maxims (possibly derived from poker) may be said to be: "Always stick to a *statement* as long as it is humanly possible. The more *absurd* it may be, the greater is the need for sticking

to it." For example, he has said that S. H. Smith's forehand drive is "*essentially* in bad form," that H. L. Doherty's chief defect is "a poor length" with his strokes, and that he himself could produce a backhand drive twice as fast as that of R. F. Doherty, but he is careful never to recant these assertions, because it is essential not to do so.

There is no more fatal fault in good lawn tennis than that of delaying to strike the ball immediately it has reached the top of the bound, but after carefully advising novices to do so in "Modern Lawn Tennis," he repeats in the "Guide" that they should wait "until the ball is about to become dead," although the reason why they should thus cultivate about *the most insidious fault in good tennis and the most difficult one to eradicate afterwards* would be rather hard to find.

The most important maxim which the reader of the Vaile lawn-tennis books should bear in mind is "Cherchez le Parmly Paret." *In almost every case*, except as regards his theories of "the English grip," and the "English angle" of the racquet, the source of Mr. Vaile's inspiration can be directly traced back to Mr. Parmly Paret. I recall his "centre theory," his mechanics of the American service, his idea about the position of the partner of the striker-out in Doubles, his statements about the hard hitting of a lifting drive, and in those and many other cases I have always found Mr. Paret's book the *fons et origo* of his theories. That Mr. Paret was aware of the "sincerest form of flattery" of himself which Mr. Vaile so freely offered him in his books is clear enough from a letter of his which appeared in *Lawn Tennis*, suggesting that he and

Mr. Vaile and the present writer should "work together for the good of lawn tennis." They are such adepts in that line by themselves that they need no co-worker. The late Mr. Jefferson Hogg used to wonder how many people like the poet Shelley would be required to "involve the world in hopeless and irretrievable ruin," and the same thought as regards the tennis world has frequently suggested itself with regard to Mr. Vaile. If Mr. Paret's statements about lawn tennis had been as good as his style is readable they would have been equally valuable when *réchauffé* with such scrupulous accuracy in the pages of Mr. Vaile, but, unfortunately, his statements under scrutiny (see the chapter on his book in "Secrets of Lawn Tennis") are rather more than questionable, and the extract on Mixed Doubles speaks for itself. Anyhow, before swallowing any of Mr. Vaile's statements on lawn tennis a short examination of Mr. Paret's writings will probably prove once more the strong intellectual affinity and even identity which exists between great minds.

Then there were the conversations with the late H. S. Mahony. Throughout Mr. Vaile's denunciations of "English" play I have constantly come across enough traces of that master-genius on lawn tennis to discover the fact that the methods of one Irishman were taken by Mr. Vaile to represent those of all the English, speaking generally. For example, he produced a photograph in his first book with perfect gravity for our instruction, showing the ridiculous *forehand grip* of that player, whose forehand drive (although he was very strong on the backhand and "overhead") was one of the very worst strokes in the *country*. He then announced that this was the

"English grip" for forehand strokes. He also showed the absurd angle at which that player habitually held his racquet for that stroke, and then produced a diagram showing the loss of force involved, and announced that this was "the English angle" at which the racquet is held. I wish it had been "the English angle" for driving, although it is *the correct and necessary position for certain wrist strokes.*

He produced a picture in *Fry's Magazine* (to which magazine tennis-players are especially indebted), which would do well enough for a low wrist volley, but shows the most ridiculous loss of power for driving, and labelled it, "English Backhand Grip." I wish it had been the English backhand grip. Then, of course, beside it there was another photograph of a grip which would be correct for driving, but *absolutely useless for low wrist volleys across the court*, and this was labelled "American and Colonial Backhand Grip," although every good backhand driver in England uses it when driving. I do not know how long this sort of farce will go on, but, personally, I find nothing particularly attractive about the ignorant depreciation of the English players which Mr. Vaile appears to find so lucrative in England.

But although he found Mr. Mahony and his methods so useful for copy, Mr. Vaile always disparaged the one great excellence in his game, viz., his backhand cross-drive, and asserted that it was spoiled by "undercut." If Mr. Vaile had had to deal with the flight of the ball which Mahony's almost perfect follow-through of his backhand drives produced, he would have been a good deal less "glib" about the undercut. A good many hundred players could corroborate my remarks on that point from their own experience.

I have hitherto made no mention of that which is after all the main cause of Mr. Vaile's out-blossoming as a tennis critic, viz., the large amount of what is called "spade work" which he has performed in the production of his three books. None of the crack players have hitherto produced anything like a complete and systematic study with photographs of the chief strokes of the game, or have attempted anything like a full and logical classification of them, although the present work represents a small attempt in that direction. Mr. Vaile, however, has undoubtedly performed the spade work (mostly all wrong), and, consequently, *faute de mieux*, he has become an authority on a game of which he has a mere smattering of knowledge.

There is, however, one great remedial force which will, I believe, largely counteract the effects of his books. Needless to say, I refer to that great and beneficial thing, competition, which drives people to sift the quality of theories and to choose the best, just as it forces them to seek the best processes in making their goods where competition is keen, to the great benefit of the public, and of themselves as well in the end.

My remarks on the "Lawn Tennis Guide" are now finished. It is, as I have said above, by far the most (apparently) moderate book that Mr. Vaile has produced. In order to get a glimpse of the real Vaile one can get it (*if desired*) in the letterpress of "Great Lawn Tennis Players," that extraordinary mixture of braggadocio, bluff, execrable prose, and unwarranted disparagement of the whole body of English "crack" players. I have unfortunately spent a good deal of my life among books (owing to the current system of education by words and figures

only), and have acquired some experience of them, but it has never before been my fate to read such a book as that. When I reflect on the almost universal approval with which the English Press greeted that book, I am more than ever convinced that the Press at present only represents the ideas of a limited section of society.

But to return to Mr. Vaile. I fancy that a casual survey of the Vaile gallery of 118 portraits tends to make it clear that to some extent the successes (such as they are) of Mr Vaile in literature here are due to the union of some mechanical knowledge with considerable physique. The photographs show traces of a physique which must have been much above the average, as is no doubt required for weight-lifting, and the remarks about laying out a court indicate that like most of the Colonials, and unlike most of the better classes here, the author of them was educated not merely with words and figures, but to do things and to make them, and to "trim the forest" as he calls it. The advantage of this in creating a practical bent of mind is far greater in all branches of after-life (not excluding literature) than most people suppose, and the fact that Mr. Vaile was thoroughly at home with the spade has undoubtedly helped him with the pen.

I should like to say a word here on an interesting topic, viz., the limits to the possible sphere of bluff in England. It is possible to "bluff" with great success in England on subjects which are uncertain and debatable, such as religion, politics, and philanthropy. When, however, we come to deal with *the principles of a physical science* such as cricket or lawn tennis, which are constantly being proved or disproved by actual facts, I suspect that although Mr.

Vaile appears to have mistaken England for America he will find it extremely difficult to pose in this matter-of-fact island as an authority on a game, viz., modern tournament tennis, without previous play in tournaments. The bent of the English mind is far too much in the direction of "cutting the cackle and coming to the 'osses" (if one may use a vulgar but most expressive phrase) to allow of such a farce being kept up at all except during a general ignorance of the correct principles of the game, which the existing books on the subject have not done very much to dispel.

My own opinion is that Mr. Vaile has far overstepped the limits of the sphere of bluff here, and in support of it I ask those who have read as far as this, and looked at the photographs, to consider whether the following passage from page 43 of the "Guide" does not prove it. "I want my readers to remember," says Mr. Vaile, "that these methods" (as expounded in the "Guide") "are *the most perfect known in the game, and the holds are the best and most suited to produce the finest strokes, for they are the results of the practice of the greatest players known in the history of the game.*" If they were, I should be sorry for the "greatest players."

Assurance can go no further. His "holds" are impossible with regard to many strokes, and a great part of his strokes (as reproduced here) are too absurd to need further description. Nearly all the finest players in the history of the game have hitherto been English, and those who remember them will know how far their game resembled that of Mr. Vaile. A smattering of mechanics, a visit to America, and an acquaintance with New Zealand are Mr. Vaile's main qualifications for posing as the Grand Lama

of a game he does not understand and cannot play. My own belief is that he will yet find he has come to the wrong country to do it.

I have been surprised at the success of his efforts in inducing English cricketers to believe that their game is dull and needs "brightening," and that, in his own words, "the tendency of British sport is not to encourage prompt thought and dashing execution," which is exactly the thing it does encourage above all else. One thing I can say with confidence, viz., that if after the article on the Cantabs in *Fry's Magazine* Mr. Vaile had happened to stray near Trinity Hall, as I remember it, about the time of the boat-races, he might have found that "prompt thought and dashing execution" were not so rare as he imagined, and that a knowledge of *natation*, as well as rotation, was advisable.

When I recall the fortitude and persistency when confronted with defeat and the wonderful strokes under difficulties which are common enough in good tournament play among the "cracks" of both sexes, I, for one, regret to see a great athletic sport dragged through the mud, and its science reduced to the level of a farce or a game of bluff.

Both Byron and Shelley were, in my opinion, actuated by the same motives of benevolence towards the English commonwealth in their works as Mr. Vaile, and the sentiments of the author of "Woman the Adorer" would no doubt have been warmly appreciated by them; but then it must be remembered that between them they had almost every intellectual gift except that of originality, which but few people would claim for the author of "Great Lawn Tennis Players."

In concluding my remarks on Mr. Vaile, I must

not forget to mention the debt of gratitude which lawn-tennis players owe to Mr. C. B. Fry and to Mr. B. C. Evelegh, of the *Field*, for the articles on the game by Mr. Vaile which have appeared in their respective journals, and I must also congratulate the Lord Chief Justice, the Bishop of London, and the Marylebone Cricket Club on the fact that Mr. Vaile has, by permission, dedicated one of his invaluable books to each of them.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LAWN TENNIS ASSOCIATION.

IT may not be generally known to the readers of this book that at present (in October, 1906) the English Lawn Tennis Association has *no voice in or control whatsoever* over the English Lawn Tennis Championships. This control is at present vested in *a small and select committee of a private club*, who have the entire disposal and management of the funds arising yearly from the presence of nearly 30,000 spectators in all at the Wimbledon Championships, who pay on the average something over (possibly a good deal over) 2s. 6d. per head. When anyone calls attention to the fact that the balance-sheet of the Lawn Tennis Association shows, or did recently, that it was either nearly or quite insolvent, and that none of the large funds derived from the "gate" at the Amateur Lawn Tennis Championships are at the disposal of, or are spent by, the Lawn Tennis Association in doing something to raise the game from the undoubtedly low and insignificant position among British sports which at present, *taking the all-round average*, it occupies, loud remonstrances from members of the All-England Club, such as Mr. Palmer, Mr. R. B. Hough, Mr. Wilson Fox, Mr. C. F. Simond, and others, are instantly raised. Some of these endeavour to overbear the claims of the general body of lawn-tennis players by the weight of an imaginary authority which they do not possess, and declare with

solemnity and assurance that the All-England Club will jealously guard its possessions. Others, such as Mr. C. F. Simond, exclaim against the effrontery of invading the sacred privacy of the finances of a club, and of asking questions about the expenditure of the money. Others, such as Mr. Hough, dwell on the pure spirit of amateurism by which the members of the club have always been actuated. Of late there have been some signs of a change of front and of a disposition to rely on the fact that it was the All-England Club which founded the Lawn Tennis Championships, and which, therefore (they allege), has the right to its proceeds.

As this last argument appears to carry more weight than the others, I think it right to point out: First, that it appears to me to consist in claiming that because a private club more than twenty years ago acted as midwife in bringing the Lawn Tennis Championships into existence, therefore it has the right to batten in perpetuity on the whole of the earnings of its precocious nurseling. Secondly, even if any such right accrued to the original members of the club committee it must be remembered that the composition of the committee is almost wholly changed. Thirdly, whatever debt (if any) was owing to the club for founding the championships has been discharged over and over again by gate-money which has often exceeded £2,000 per annum. Fourthly, it would be rather an extravagant claim to suggest that the general body of lawn-tennis players are powerless to decide by means of their representatives all matters concerning the Lawn Tennis Championships, including the venue and the disposal of the proceeds. There is much talk about *expenses* incurred in erecting wooden stands at

Wimbledon, but if the gate-money of the last few years has not yielded the club a large profit after paying for all such things it is very remarkable.

There is no doubt that in the past there have been many singular features about the management of lawn tennis. For example, it may not be generally known that the lawn-tennis courts at the Championships are marked out in one way, but that the regulations prescribe that they shall be marked out in another way. The regulations provide that the line which divides the base-line into two equal parts, and which limits the position of the server, shall be "imaginary," whereas at the Championships it is real, is about 2ft. long, and is marked from a point about 6in. or 8in. outside of the base-line. The absurdity of this variation between rules and practice was pointed out to the Association as far back as 1904, but rather than appear to take any advice in the matter the Association did nothing. Any level-headed person would say at once that they should either have amended the rule of marking the court, or called attention to the breach of it at the Amateur Championships, and I for one consider that their conduct in so plain a matter was simply *childish*. Personally, I think the amended marking of the court is the better.

Among the usual burlesque incidents of the past year must be reckoned the flouting of the assembled Lawn Tennis Association early in the season when they desired to pass a resolution that the manager of a lawn-tennis goods business ought not to be secretary of the Amateur Championship where his goods were used. Mr. W. H. Collins, however, declined to allow the resolution to be put, which would certainly have been carried on

that occasion, and for some unknown reason the meeting did not select a fresh chairman in order to express the opinion which the majority of them wanted to express.

As regards the action of the Association in taking a poll of a representative list of voters (selected by themselves) concerning the alteration of the unfair rule whereby the holder of the Championship only plays one match while the challenger plays half a dozen, and of officially resolving afterwards that they would disregard the result of the poll, I may say that I have never before known a body of English amateur sportsmen who have *officially* done anything of this sort, and I believe I never shall. I go further and say that if this sort of thing were really typical of English amateur sport, which I do not for a moment suggest, then I and many others whom I have known (especially at the Universities) would be sorry that we were Englishmen at all. Except for lawn tennis, English amateur athletic sports are not usually conducted after the fashion of an action at law between two Hebrew solicitors.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ENGLISH CRACK PLAYERS.

AFTER playing against most of the English cracks on and off for a good many years, and after putting aside for a moment the actual facts of their public performances, I should say that on the whole the present English crack players are in different ways a body of men of exceptional talents and attainments as regards lawn tennis. It is no doubt true that players of such all-round ability in every department of the game (except the American services) as were Pim, Ernest Renshaw, and W. Baddeley, are as rare now as they were formerly, but I should hesitate to say that either of the Messrs. Doherty, at their best, is, or was, inferior to any of them. It is true that Pim, about 1890, had a far finer touch for cut volleys at the net than the brothers, but then he had a far more erratic, "hit or miss" style of play than "H. L." Moreover, the rest of the cracks, although not quite so good "all round" as those I have mentioned, have quite enough real and substantial excellence in their game to place English lawn tennis in the position it now indisputably occupies, viz., at the head of the lawn tennis of the civilised world.

Few people realise how much trouble and how many favourable circumstances have been necessary before most of the "cracks" could attain to the skill which they possess. Money, inclination, abilities, and con-

siderable leisure have all contributed to the making of players who in some cases have played with frequent success for eighteen years in 250 tournaments, and in most cases have played for anything from ten to fifteen summers. Many of the best players, among them such as Lewis, D. G. Chaytor, Pim, Baddeley, Barrett, and Boucher, have combined skill at the game with constant attention to a civil calling, but from various circumstances they have been in a minority in this respect, although there is no essential reason why this should be so.

Anyhow, it appears to the present writer that, for the credit of English lawn tennis and of the players whose skill has only been acquired by much perseverance and sacrifice of various kinds, and for the benefit of the rising generation of players, it is most desirable that illustrations of their separate and individual methods in making their best shots should be obtained without delay. They should be obtained and reproduced in book form (together with any explanations which the players themselves afford), by some rational and intelligent player or committee of players who are practically acquainted with their subject. Personally, owing to absence in other climes I shall be unable to render any assistance other than that which the present volume and the "Secrets of Lawn Tennis" may afford, but the work ought to be done by somebody. Before Mr. Vaile's books appeared there had been practically no attempt to reproduce the strokes of the "cracks" in general, and it is much to be regretted that such travesties of their methods should have been circulated in default of anything better. "Lawn Tennis at Home and Abroad" did not profess to show the strokes of the *game,* but contained photographs, for example, such as

"King Edward the Seventh conversing with the Dohertys," &c.

Anyone who should undertake a work of the kind I am suggesting would need to scour the country with a photographer who knew enough of the game to get the desired photographs from the actual play of the "cracks" and not entirely from camera posing. By way of indicating roughly the sort of lines on which the book might be compiled, I would make the following suggestions:

1. I am of opinion that as regards the cardinal features of lawn tennis, viz., the follow-through and the use of the shoulder, E. R. Allen is by far the best model in England. He has played in about 300 tournaments and must have won nearly a hundred Open Singles and Doubles, besides innumerable other events. His backhand drive both straight and across the court is simply a model stroke, and it has one great advantage, from the learner's point of view, viz., that there is *nothing superfluous about it* at any part of it. Therefore, if this stroke were to be cinematographed from start to finish, anyone would be able to see at a glance the exact way to play this stroke without being confused by any superfluous gallery flourishes. A successful experience of eighteen years in playing a particular kind of stroke counts for something even in lawn-tennis literature. His forehand drive is simply perfect as regards the use of the shoulder, the pace and the flight of the ball, but as the racquet is held with the head nearly downwards it is unsuitable for imitation in this latter respect by the great army of players who know the unique advantages which that drive possesses in the vital respect of speed in hitting and speed in running for a desired position

immediately afterwards. The flight of E. R. Allen's returns of the service and other forehand drives is unlike that of any other player I have seen. It comes as straight as a flagstaff, low over the net, without any perceptible rise at all, and the consequence is that in spite of all Mr. Vaile's talk about the advantages of a "forehand drive with lift," which rises a couple of feet over the net, this stroke of Allen's is not only infinitely harder for a man at the net to volley, but is, in fact (as regards its flight), the only suitable stroke for passing two fine volleyrs in a Double. The further reason for its use in a Double in preference to a lifting stroke lies in the fact that after making it one can *start to run forward instantly*, and one is not *glued to the spot for an invaluable second or two after making the shot, as is the case with the lifting drive, owing to the necessary swing-back of the body after making that stroke.* In a Single a very fine lifting drive often compensates *to some extent* for this drawback by the difficulty produced in returning it, but in a good Double a quick start after driving is often absolutely essential.

In the exciting rush of a first-class Double, in which all four players are constantly aiming at position at the net, or assuming that position, a man who made a lifting drive and sent it 2ft. above the net would have no time to run up after it, and would get the ball "killed" by one of the volleyers in most cases. I am not theorising here about the flight of the return of the service and of other ground strokes in a good Double, but am simply stating the facts of the actual experience of those who play against first-class volleying pairs in Doubles.

Another striking and almost (at present) unique

excellence about E. R. Allen's game consists in his downright punching or slogging from the shoulder of low forehand volleys. His backhand volleying is also nearly as good, and I ask any player who has watched the pace he can impart to these strokes through hitting them with *an absolutely plain-faced bat* (*i.e.*, with no cut at all) whether Mr. Vaile's advice to play these strokes with lift be not nonsense. *Their essence consists in a true, hard hit, and a straight flight to the open spot in their opponent's defence. Any lift would militate directly against these objects.* I am speaking now, be it remembered, not of cut volleys in a Single, but of those rapid rests of volleys in a Double between four good players who are mostly close to the service line. The way E. R. Allen follows-through his forehand volleys or "punches" is a treat to witness.

Nor must mention be omitted of "C. G."; although not so active or mobile as his brother, his low volleying, when he can reach the ball, is very nearly as good, his backhand drive straight down the court is one of the very best "body" strokes in England, and he is now decidedly good at "smashing," although, curiously enough, in his best days, when he sometimes beat the Baddeleys in their prime, both he and his brother played overhead balls in a soft and defensive manner. His forehand cut out of the left court to his right in returning service is well worth preserving by photography.

It is the opinion of all the best judges of the game who have seen the Renshaws, Baddeleys, Dohertys, Pim and Stoker, &c., that although comparatively weak overhead, the brothers Allen are, or were, the finest low volleyers in a Double that have yet been seen. Unfortunately, if a photographer desires to get snap-

shots of these low volleys of the Allens, he will probably find them both intent on knocking out some rural couple at a small tournament who only just know one end of the racquet from the other, and consequently he may have to follow them about for some time until they come across a couple good enough to extend them. But E. R. Allen's superb shoulder-work and follow-through in his ground strokes can be seen at once as soon as he plays anybody. He can play his strokes either fast or slow, and when one considers the backhand either of him or of his brother (among many others), the absurdity of Mr. Vaile's assertion that there are no English players with a good backhand, and that they all play a merely defensive stroke on the backhand, will be apparent to all who have seen them play in their 300 odd tournaments. I do not exactly know what grip E. R. Allen uses for his backhand drive, but whatever it may be the reader can take it from me that it is all right. The players (whose name is legion) who, like myself, have mostly come off badly against this fine driver can at least comfort themselves with the reflection that they were defeated by a player who, as regards quantity of practice and experience in several hundred tournaments (combined with absence of intellectual and professional distractions), was not one man in a million, but one man in several millions.

I am aware that after this long eulogy of E. R. Allen as (in some ways) the best model of lawn tennis in England, some people will naturally ask why he has never won the Championship. To these I would reply that supreme success at lawn tennis depends on a variety of factors, among which courage stands first, and then come eccentricities of figure (natural and acquired) and personal habits, *e.g.*, as to food and

liquor, &c., &c. The brothers once won seventy prizes between them in one season.

2. H. L. Doherty is, on the whole, not only the best all-round player in England, but the *most correct* one also. Hence Mr. Vaile steadily decries him, asserts that his chief defect is poor length, and that "to follow his tactics in about 97 per cent. of instances means courting disaster"! He, however, never appeared to me to have the "touch" for cut volleys at the net such as Pim possessed. His actual grips on both hands, and the start, impact, and finish of his forehand and backhand drives (of all kinds), and especially of his smashes, could not fail to be useful. The position of his hand and racquet when he "addresses" the ball, as he does every time before attempting to make the stroke, forms one of the great secrets of his success. By this means he seems to measure out the stroke beforehand. His follow-through, on the forehand especially, is perfect, and should be contrasted with the Vaile photograph on that subject.

3. R. F. Doherty has a special knack of swinging his bat on to a backhand drive (apparently beginning the swing with the head downwards), whereby he gets more pace on that stroke (with great accuracy) than anybody else in England. R. F.'s grips and his method of addressing the ball on the forehand should also be reproduced. His backhand return of the service out of the left court I have never yet seen equalled. His cross-volleys near the net in a Single, especially on the backhand, although useful, never struck me as being quite equal to the rest of his game, although his low forehand volleying is admirable.

4. The one great feature of S. H. Smith's game is his forehand drive. Although Mr. Vaile, as in duty

bound, has inserted photographs of his drive in one of his books amid the stack of mere photographic padding which it contains, he detracts from their value by asserting that Smith's drive is "quite a personal shot" and "cannot be recommended to a learner." It would be a good thing if a few more players would cultivate the pluck and muscle which are necessary for this "quite personal shot." In case an exaggerated importance is attached to the eccentric size and shape of his racquet handle it should be remembered that many of the best strokes of the game in the shape of fine volleys near the net and first-class backhand drives are not included in his répertoire of strokes at all. With regard to his *handle*, though not to his stroke, I agree that it is quite a personal matter.

5. F. L. Riseley's grips should be of interest. One of his finest strokes is a backhand drive, which he steers straight down the court when one would often expect it to go across. He has a wonderfully free swing on to his forehand drive, and is very good at overhead balls.

6. J. M. Boucher's grip some inches from the end of his handle is very remarkable, but the results he obtains are not less so. His forehand drive should be reproduced at the start, impact, and finish, together with a diagram of the flight he obtains for the ball with his drive *after it has bounced*, which is about the most difficult for an opponent that I have seen. Although inferior to Smith's, his game possesses massive good qualities, and he might win the Championship in a weakish year.

7. The game of H. Roper Barrett (an uncommonly tough nut to crack) is like that of a billiard player who makes his breaks almost without a fluke and without invoking Fortune by loose slogging. Any opponent of

his would probably agree with me that his grips, especially for his perfect though careful forehand stroke, are well worth photographing, together with his drive. His volleying near the net is good and extremely active. In fact, his strokes are mostly on a dead level of accuracy, much like those of W. Baddeley.

8. A. W. Gore's forehand drive is worthy of "cinematograph" treatment in order to obtain a good idea of one of the most correct and severest standard strokes that can be seen. His backhand is also an excellent stroke, and is (like his forehand) the result of a quarter of a century of play. His forehand is most imperfectly illustrated in the Vaile books. The reason why this should be so, in spite of the goodwill which Mr. Vaile frequently expresses for him, is clear enough. *The Gore drive knocks the lifting and cutting theory of lawn tennis to pieces.* It is true that a man like Brookes, with a knowledge of volleying and the advantage over him of more than a dozen years, can beat him, but his play against H. A. Parker and others is simply a conclusive demonstration that *hard hitting is the principal thing in lawn tennis* and that lifting and cutting are only secondary. Hence he upsets the Vaile theories.

9. I have not seen Wilding since he has improved, but his forehand drive, which he hits with considerable pluck, and his American service (with grips) should certainly be interesting. After playing a good deal in Doubles with him I should describe him as distinctly "rocky" in a first-class Double, although his ability as a Mixed player is beyond all question. He is a cricketer who has turned into a crack lawn-tennis player.

10. M. Ritchie's forehand grip, with details as to

the size of his handle and his grip for volleys at the net, would be interesting.

11. G. W. Hillyard's drives, especially on the backhand, are simply standard strokes, for they are all played from the shoulder, and his follow-through is excellent. His powers as a "smasher" of overhead balls are not often surpassed. His handle is eccentric in shape, and it should be mentioned that he has never excelled in underhand volleying, which is, *perhaps*, in part due to this.

12. W. V. Eaves is also a standard player. His grips for his American services, his backhand volley (a beautiful stroke), his backhand stroke out to the left, and his half-volleys would be of great use when photographed. He imparts a hard and incisive slash like a sword-cut into his backhand strokes. His half-volleys are, or were, unsurpassed.

13. G. Greville has often given (especially at Brighton and Eastbourne) about as good an exhibition of the "useful" style of game all round as could be desired. He is as quick on to the ball at the top of its flight after it has bounced (*a point which is second to none in importance in playing lawn tennis*) as anyone in England, and both on the forehand and backhand his strokes, devoid of all flourish, are most useful.

14. E. D. Black's backhand strokes, and especially his grip in making them, are well worth a place in any book on tennis.

15. B. Hillyard's backhand drive across court with body-swing is admirable, and his forehand is also well above the average, but he is uncertain and absent-minded as a player.

16. The Belgian player M. Paul de Borman ought to be cinematographed at every point of his remarkable

forehand drive, which is a study in itself of the rotation of the ball. He is harmless enough against our best-class players, but this stroke of his is worthy of the closest attention. He is depicted in one of Mr. Vaile's books (Plate 50 of "Great Lawn Tennis Players") as serving the *reverse* overhead cut service with racquet in position close to his left shoulder for the *forward* cut service, but I have not time to inquire how he ultimately produces a reverse twist from this position.

An able writer in one of the London papers recently observed, truly enough, that the history of the Lawn Tennis Championships up to the present was practically the history of three pairs of brothers, and that the number of "protagonists" in the game was exceedingly small. No better proof of this could be found than in the fact that players like Riseley and Gore, whose game consists entirely of activity and free hitting, and who scarcely know the meaning of the word "finesse," should have reached the final round at Wimbledon four times apiece. Ritchie has also reached it three times. Some people may wonder that a player like H. L. Doherty, who is probably inferior to all three in muscular power, should yet beat them with ease (losing one set to Riseley in four years!), but his victories represent the fact that there is such a thing as headwork in lawn tennis as well as muscles and a fine digestion, although the small size of "the field" of good players often tends to conceal it.

Before concluding this chapter on the British cracks I must mention one apparently trifling matter which would, I believe, have a considerable effect on the game. I suggest that at the end of each season the Lawn Tennis Association should (by voting among themselves) decide on the names of the twelve best players of the year, and that these players should then

be permitted to have the British arms engraved in suitable colours on the breast pocket of their "blanket" coats. Of course, in some years very few places in the twelve would remain to be filled up, but, anyhow, the competition for this honour would be almost certain greatly to increase the keenness of many of the players.

My suggestions for embalming the skill of the existing English cracks in the camera are now finished, and I hope that if they are acted on a committee of capable players will supervise the work in order that the photographs may not merely form an album of mementoes, but display the correct methods in playing the various strokes of those who are past-masters of them.

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